

Slaves of State, Intellectuals of Development: A Genealogy of Development in Ethiopia

YONAS ASHINE DEMISSE



MAKERERE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH



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Dedicated to
Fernus Astatke Robi
my mother and my best teacher of all time.

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INTRODUCTION

THE GENESIS OF this book can be traced back to 2012 when I was taking a course in the major debate on the study of Africa at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR). Anchored on the state and political subject formation on the continent, the course covers thematic issues such as the state and state formation, slavery, colonialism, nationalism and development. Reading interdisciplinary literature, we raised critical questions. Getting the question right was the holy grail of the scholarship of political knowledge at the MISR. This book is born of the tradition which cherishes asking questions as the beginning of wisdom.

Most of the questions in this book were a result of reading, discussing and writing experiences at the MISR. Most of them are directly linked to myself and to political subjectivity in Ethiopia today. When I joined the MISR in 2012 as a graduate student, the discourse of development was in its heyday in Ethiopia. Development, or *lāmat*, was a ubiquitous term defining the mode of rule and seductively producing development subjects. It was an adjective to many entities such as the state, political elites, party, investor, student, even abstract notions. Democracy itself was defined by development. Development is an indispensable concept in the study of state-society relations in modern Ethiopia, but its dominating tendency in the period was an invitation to many students of politics.

Initially, I aspired to conduct a kind of anthropology of state developmentalism but later I came to understand that political anthropology and synchronic analysis of state developmentalism without an in-depth historical explanation would not answer broader questions related to the modern state—apart from the rewriting of the history of global development discourse using Ethiopian politics as an ethnographic site. To escape this limitation, it became imperative to link the study of state developmentalism with state formation and slavery in pre-modern Ethiopia—and the book was envisioned from two seemingly extreme questions which became one in the process.

The first question is about the form of power that existed in pre-modern Ethiopia. I explore the dialectical link between the politics of state formation and the politics of slavery-*geta-barya* relations which are defined broadly as relations between superior and subordinate master-slave, lord-servant, God-believers, king-subject. I show the nature of this power and how the legacy of the *geta-barya*, profane and sacred power relations, shaped the modern political theology of state developmentalism.

The second inquiry explores the genealogy of present state developmentalism, which appears as a secularized but theological pastoral power relationship between the emperor as a midwife of development and the commoner as the object of salvational action by the emperor. The book shows how the discourse, institution and materiality of development have played a significant role in the evolution of modern politics in Ethiopia.

The study was realized through upward and downward navigation in the Braudelian *longue durée* historical time frame. Although I recognize the periodization in the narrative history of Ethiopia, this book freely navigates across periodization and chronology; it relates the contested formation of the pre-modern states and the emergence of the modern Ethiopian state. The book covers a long time span, connecting pre-modern state formation with modern state making by making use of genealogy. In some parts, the book focuses on selected events and episodes towards a deeper understanding of historical entities. At another time, it considers a section of history that transcends centuries as explanatory sites to make intelligible certain historical trends.

The book employs innovative methodologies, combining conceptual, ethnographic, historical, historiographical, literary sources and archival work, putting them in conversation with each other and also subverting boundaries between them. It is a predominantly historical ethnography and genealogy of Amharic/Ge'ez concepts and Ethiopian discursive tradition. Documents such as chronicles, newspapers, religious and literary works, novels and archival evidence, memoirs, travel accounts and biographies are read as ethnographic sites. It does history with an ethnographic

view and combines it with the genealogy of concepts and discursive tradition. It is also a discourse analysis but considers agents beyond mere speaking subjects. The book can also be read as a history of political subjects such as intellectuals, reformist bureaucrats and popular forces. It is additionally about the political ethnography of tribute, a unit from its analysis with which any pre-modern political history of Ethiopia must begin. In the book, units such as tribute and development are seen not only as discourses of power but also as symbolic material or things or commodities, playing a role beyond production and distribution, shaping political relations. I create triple ethnographic moments in a comparative manner: subjects, discourses and things.

The object of this book is to present a history of the state, of the political, in Ethiopia. With a background in history and political science, my interest was to study the state with its dual features: a culprit in violence and the suffering of many as well as a site for emancipation. The dual features of the state have produced a rich debate and this book will, I hope, contribute to the dialogue connecting state and society. Demystifying one pillar of Ethiopian exceptionalism, I locate Ethiopian state formation in the history of a similar pattern in pre-modern Africa, and particularly state formation in the Sudanic states. Freedom is about reorganizing the state and the society that produced it so that both enable inclusive if not egalitarian politics. Without reorganization, regime shifts—even conducting elections—may not inform redemptive politics. This interest in the structure of state power does not preclude telling stories of political subjects such as slaves, the masses or intellectuals. What would the history of the state be if not a story of political subjects?

As politics is predominantly a relation between political subjects, this book starts with slaves and elite slaves in the political realm and ends with intellectual and reformist bureaucrats within the emerging modern state of Ethiopia. In the book, I analyze the dialectical link between the politics of pre-modern state formation and the history of slavery and politics of *geta-barya* (master-slave) relations. I have tried to show how slaves were formed as social, political and economic subjects and to locate their place in the public

or political realm, debunking the historiographical binary narrative of slavery in domestic space in Ethiopia and in the slave trade outside of Ethiopia. I argue that *barya* as a category meant multiple subjects occupying multiple relations and spaces—beyond the Atlantic model of the homogenized and racialized conceptualization of a slave as the property of a master.

This book is also a political history of the Ethiopian discursive tradition. The book frames modernity with its discursive reality, challenging the narration of modernity in association with singular spectacular moments such as war, students' movement or revolution or representation of personalities such as emperors as founding fathers or intellectuals as agents of change. Focusing on discursive analysis and conceptual genealogy, I have sought to make the social and popular history of political ideas in Ethiopia more intelligible. The quest for reforming the mode of politics from war, conquest, destruction and adversity towards peace, harmony, plenty and fraternity was central in Ethiopian popular imagination as exhibited in texts such as *Fəkkare Iyäsus* and novels such *Ṭobyä*, both of which are read ethnographically in this book. Popular imaginations pertaining to ideas of living-in-the-world as a political community and anticipation of the utopia of civil and secular political leadership, yet to be realized, shaped the making of the modern Ethiopian state. The mode of Ethiopian modern politics has been shaped significantly by this discourse of progress, which has been articulated through different concepts such as *śarat*, *ləmat* and *śələṭane*.

The book covers the genealogy of the idea of development, as we know it today, in Ethiopia, locating its emergence—if not the origin—in the rich Ethiopian intellectual tradition that has produced knowledge for centuries. Through this genealogy, I tell of a sacred site that reproduces the popular quest for change and transformation. I locate the emergence and evolution of the idea of the modern state, with development as its ethos, in this discursive tradition, and I hope to have convincingly depicted the textual emergence of the modern state of Ethiopia. I argue that the past was not devoid of ideas of progress and improvement and that even the very institution of slavery stood in the discourse of progress in which a slave subject

was represented as an object of intervention to be baptized and cultivated as a process of integration to the host community.

Thematically, the book begins with slavery and ends with development. The connection between slavery and development as discourse and institution did not, as it might seem, emanate from a chronological succession between the two. Their similarity is that slavery and development both became sites of state formation and state building. In pre-modern Ethiopia, slavery and other institutions such as religion mobilized the masses and the elite to form the bond between rulers and ruled. Modern power has had to rely on development to bond the ruler and the ruled. I show how the structure of power that relies on patronage endures across time, in spite of the presence of an emancipatory movement that restrains it.

The central thesis of this book is that the multiple legacies of the pre-modern state and mode of politics have shaped modern power relations in Ethiopia. State developmentalism or economic nationalism, for example, redeployed the pastoral mode of subjection, retaining the religious discourse as a form of political theology. Perhaps, as argued here, pastoral power continued to shape power and subjectivization in both pre-modern and modern Ethiopia. *Geta-barya* and tributary hierarchical political relations were modes or sites of pastoral power in premodern Ethiopia; state developmentalism has emerged as an alternative mode of modern power and has endured in spite of regime change, becoming the language of both modes of rule and resistance. What is at stake in this genealogy of developmentalism is not the degree of realization of the constructed utopia that developmentalism promises but, rather, what this promised utopia does to the mode of politics. I agree that power always faces resistance (as Michel Foucault theorized and Mahmood Mamdani has depicted) in the colonial environment and in the decolonizing moment. Developmentalism as a discourse of power produced a mode of rule in Ethiopia. It also shaped the mode of resistance. Politics is about how subjects interact and survive, inclusive of but not limited to the politics of resistance. This book has tried to show the mode of doing politics and surviving, and creative interaction with the mode of rule.

Slaves and the Formation of the Ethiopian State in the *Longue Durée*

One of the most dishonoured and impoverished among all (*barya*) slaves in Susənyos palace, named Mälkä Šädəq, revolted and mobilized slaves and descendants of slaves as well as Qurban and children and grandchildren of the Qurban.¹

THE HISTORY OF slaves slips into the chronicles of the Ethiopian emperors. The epigraph above relates to the spectacular revolt of an elite slave recorded in the chronicle of Emperor Susənyos (1607–1632). A similar event occurred during the reign of Emperor Bă’ədä Maryam (1468–1478) whose chronicle recorded the defection of a *čäwa* (imperial) army.² The revolt of a slave army termed *wəllağ* (referring to persons of slave descent) is recorded by the chronicler of Emperor Bäkaffa (1721–1730). Emperor Zädəngəl (1603–1604) was killed by a similar revolt, that of Qurban, a *čäwa* army led by *Ras ZäŠəllase*, who aspired to power. The most recent such contest in Ethiopia took place early in the twentieth century when a palace army, *Mähal səfari* (literally, the centrist who does not take a political position between contending groups), was actively involved in the politics of transition. In this contest for power, the *Mähal səfari* was mobilized by Prince Täfäri Mäkwännən in his journey to become

1 Hayle Alämu, *Yä Aše Susənyos Zena Mäwal* (Addis Ababa: Sirak Publishers, 2005), p.92.

2 Hayle Alämu, *Yä Ityopya Tarik: Yä Aše Zära Yacəqob əna Yä Aše Bă’ədä Maryam Zena Mäwal* (Addis Ababa: Sirak Publishers, 2007), pp.42–44.

emperor Ḥaylā Šəllase I. According to the prominent writer Märsäce-Ḥazän Wäldä-Qirqos, the Mähal säfari can be seen as equivalent to numerous pre-modern imperial armies such as the Qurban. The distinguished historian Bahru Zewde also equated the Mähal Säfari with the Qurban of the early seventeenth century, mainly because of its political role.³

These fragmentary records of spectacular encounters between the emperor and the imperial army of slaves and captives invite us to pause our historical and theoretical questions about the dialectical relations between the politics of pre-modern state formations, the history of slavery and the politics of *geta-barya* pastoral power relationships which transcend the master-slave bond in plantation or chattel slavery to encompass the relationship between superior and subordinate, including those of master-slave, of lord-servant, of god-believers and of king-subject. Such publicly recorded episodes are an insightful tool for rethinking the power relationship between emperors and elite slaves who had multiple power positions within the imperial power structure as power brokers, elite politicians and soldiers in the Ethiopian polity. As the historian Richard Pankhurst confirmed, “slave troops ... had become important in the very centre of imperial power”.⁴

The current volume covers the evolution of slavery as a discourse of power and of power relationships, and the gradual disappearance of power from the national political space with the emergence of *šərat*, *šələṭane* and *ləmat* (order, civilization and development) discourses as the language and ethos of the modern Ethiopian state. The book explores how the legacy of the *geta-barya* sacred and profane power relations shaped the modern political theology of state developmentalism known in Amharic as *ləmatawi*

3 Märsäce Ḥazän Wäldä Qirqos, *Yähayaññaw Kəflä Zämän Mäbača: Yäzämän Tarik Təzzətaye Kayähut əna Käsämmahut 1896–1922* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002 Eth. Cal.); see also Bahru Zewde, “The Challenge of the New Millennium: Renaissance or Reappraisal?” *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. III. No. 2, (Spring, 2008), pp.33–48.

4 Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands: Essays in Regional History from Ancient Times to the End of the 18th Century* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1997).

māngəst. Developmentalism, I argue here, establishes a secularized theological and pastoral power relationship between the emperor as the midwife of development and the commoner as the object of salvational action by the emperor. The question is how the discourse between the emperor and commoners over the institution and materiality of development played a significant role in national politics and articulated with the global discourse of development.

Using slavery to illuminate power relations, this book studies development as a discourse of power based on the ethos of the gradual improvement of social conditions. It is about the forms of power, a history of subjects such as slaves (and, later, intellectuals and the general population) as targets of development intervention, and their role in the history of the Ethiopian political community, the state.

Slavery, a Scotoma in the Political History of Ethiopia

The entry point of the book is a historiographical assumption that I observed in the scholarship of Ethiopian slavery, which is part of national Ethiopian historiography. The subject of slavery had been written in two parts, slavery in Ethiopia and the slave trade outside Ethiopia, mainly in the Arab and Ottoman empires.⁵ Most scholars have framed their historical reconstruction within this binary discourse: domestic and chattel slavery. Orlando Patterson also presents Ethiopian slavery as an exemplary form of domestic slavery.⁶ This binary framing of slavery scholarship has created a scotoma or blind spot in the political history of Ethiopia. I argue that Ethiopian slaves and captives were active subjects of the empire in the public space. Like slaves in the Sudanic states such as the sultanates of Dar Fur and Fungi in Egypt where the Mamluks ruled, and the Zanj of the Swahili coast, the Ethiopian slaves, captives and other similar categories of subjects played key roles in the formation

5 See Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia: 1896–1974* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1995), p.56.

6 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

and evolution of the Ethiopian state.⁷

Official chroniclers wrote about the role of slaves and captives as a footnote to the history of emperors and to the official history of the state and the church. The political and social actions and words of slaves, eunuchs, captives, female slaves and manumitted subjects slipped into the writings of court historians—but irrespective of the pervasive presence of slaves and captives in the public realm of the empire, slavery and the role of slaves remained a scotoma.

The mainstream historiography of Ethiopia predominantly covers state formation, excluding social history and the history of different ethnic groups and of women.⁸ In the official history of Ethiopian state formation actors are asymmetrically represented. The history of the Ethiopian state could plausibly be called the history of the masters. Cognisant of this trend, Donald L. Donham states that there are many “others” whose roles in the making of modern Ethiopia are yet to be told.⁹ Slaves are definitely one group among these “other” Ethiopians whose story is left out of the mainstream history. The historiographical blind spot blocks our understating of pre-modern politics and, by extension, the nature of the modern state of Ethiopia and its politics. It is a product of the uncritical imposition of theories and concepts of the mode of production such as feudalism to explain the political formations in Ethiopia. Most Ethiopianist scholars working in Marxist and modernization paradigms agree on the theoretical relevance of feudalism to explain Ethiopian political history;¹⁰ nonetheless, in using Perry Anderson’s seminal

7 See Mahmood Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2009).

8 See Bahru Zewde, “A Century of Ethiopian Historiography,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Volume 33, No 2 (2000); and Bizuneh Belete, “Women in Ethiopian History: A Bibliographic Review,” *Northeast African Studies*, Volume 8, Number 3, (2001).

9 Donald Donham and W. James, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia. Essays in History and Social Anthropology*, ed. D.L. Donham and W. James (Oxford: James Currey, 1986), p.3.

10 See some exemplary works such as Hiwot Addis, “Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution,” *Review of African Political Economy*, 1975; Bahru Zewde, “Economic Origins of the Absolutist State in Ethiopia (1916–1935),” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 17 (1984), pp.1–29, and Tsegaye Tegenu, *Evolution of Ethiopian Absolutism: The Genesis and the Making of the Fiscal Military State, 1696–1913* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1996).

work *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, most of these scholars skip his remark on the absence of feudalism in medieval Ethiopia.¹¹

What is at stake in this mode of writing is the misrepresentation of historical subjects and events owing to the superimposition of concepts developed elsewhere. Viewed through the concept of feudalism, political relations in Ethiopia have been limited to class structures involving the “labour process” or the “social forces of production” or the “property relationship” or the “surplus extraction relationship”.¹² This allows historians to see the platonic trinity of social classes—those who rule, who fight and who produce—as the only historical and political actors and they silence the history of numerous occupational groups, slaves and captives.

Few scholars criticize the use of feudalism as a conceptual device for studying the political history of Ethiopia. Most change the heuristic device from feudalism to a tributary mode of production, and shift the focus from land-holding to office-holding and from production to the politics of distribution.¹³ In this analytical framework, the story of slaves is limited to servitude in the household and agricultural estates as unfree labour. Irrespective of the shift from feudalism, the tributary mode of production school of thought also reproduced the binary discourse of domestic slavery in Ethiopia and slave trade out of Ethiopia. In this model, a slave is a mere “*inorganic condition* of production, alongside the cattle or as an appendage of the soil”.¹⁴

Other writers who refrain from using the mode of production—either feudal or tributary mode—take one element of the polity as the central explanatory constituent. For example, Margery Perham argues that “a study of the government of Ethiopia must begin with the emperor, the *Nəgusä Nəgäst* or king of kings”.¹⁵

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- 11 Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1974), p.411.
12 Robert Brenner, “Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe,” *Past & Present*, No. 70 (1976, 31), pp.30–75.
13 Berhanu Abegaz, “Poverty Trap in a Tributary Mode of Production: The Peasant Economy of Ethiopia,” College of William and Mary Department of Economics, Working Paper Number 6, 2004.
14 Karl Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p.87. (italics in the original.)
15 Margery Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia* (London: Faber, 1969), p.9.

Following Perham, Christopher Clapham considers the emperor or the king of kings as “the center and moving force of the Ethiopian government”, and the “nucleus of this traditional system”.¹⁶ Both Perham and Clapham focus on the emperor as the maker of history, shifting the narrative from feudalism but reproducing the discourse of Asiatic mode of production and charismatic leadership.¹⁷ Representing slaves as objects in the long-distance trade route linking Ethiopia to Arabia and India, or as ahistorical subjects in the domestic realm, these heuristic devices silence the social and political places of slaves and slavery in both intra- and inter-state relations in the Ethiopian region.

Scholars who attempt to design a local heuristic device cut slaves and slavery out of public history. Teshale Tibebu’s and Säyfu Mättafärya’s works can be considered an exception, both in their utilization of local terms as a heuristic device and in the elaboration of slaves as social groups in Ethiopian history.¹⁸ Teshale meticulously uses the *gəbər*, the Ethiopian tribute system, to reconstruct the history of the labour or the production, the appropriation of tribute and the redistributive element. Teshale, however, defines the *gəbər* system, only as “an ethnic property” (to use Bala Usman’s phrase), in the same way that political systems were tribalized in Nigerian history.¹⁹ His investigation, for example, falls short of explaining what Samir Amin describes as the tributary ideology and accumulation through territorial expansion.²⁰ Polities in Africa waged wars to form tributary relations with less powerful polities or to delink tributary links from relatively powerful polities. The empire of Ethiopia, like that of other

16 Christopher Clapham, *Haile Selassie’s Government* (New York: Praeger, 1969). Clapham considers the emperor and/or the very idea of the emperor as the nucleus of the traditional polity; however, he is a product of the structure, a social structure, which Clapham implicitly defines as tradition.

17 Marx, *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. Marx explains the Asiatic forms with the absence of property, the despot as unifying figure; and social and polities unchanging, because of the absence of class contradiction.

18 Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896–1974* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1995).

19 Yusuf Bala Usman, *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writing of Yusufu Bala Usman* (Zaria-Nigeria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 2006), p.56.

20 Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988).

pre-modern African states, expanded territorially to form tributary relations with newly-conquered polities, and waged numerous wars to maintain this tributary link. Irrespective of difference in language or religion, tribute was a common currency in relationships between pre-modern inter- and intra-polities in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, Teshale uses the term “tributary”, not “feudal”, and apart from his cultural emphasis his narrative appears less different from those who use the category of feudalism; like them Teshale describes the *gəbər* system as “made up of three main classes—worshippers, fighters and producers (slaves and occupational minority ‘castes’ cut across class lines)”.²¹

Teshale’s meticulous use of local terms as heuristic devices writes ethnic history into national history, upholding the trinity of classes, their story told through the mode of production school. Teshale’s reconceptualization and reinterpretation of history from the perspective of a local paradigm could not present a plausible narrative to the other social groups such as slaves. His discussion of slavery also reproduces the binary. He treats slaves as anomalies.

Säyfu Mättäfäryä’s brief seminal work is more progressive, presenting an elaborate discussion on the history and meanings of slave names, focusing on Amharan culture but also touching on cultures such as Arabic, Oromo, Somali and Hadya, confirming not only some similarities between institutions of slavery but also briefly depicting the relevance of comparative slavery studies in Africa. Considering slaves and servile subjects as common denominators of these communities, he removes the domestic slave and the slave trade from the Ethiopian binary and discusses slaves in a different binary—slavery in *bəherawi* (national) and *betäsābawi* (household) realms (although his remarkable discussion of the *barya* at *bəherawi* or the national and collective level is limited by the impact of slavery on the Ethiopian state’s quest for membership of the League of Nations). The public place of slaves in the pre-modern era did not attract his attention. Still, his collection of many slaves’ names in the Amharic linguistic world can be used to further illuminate the

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²¹ Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*, p.7.

nature of Ethiopian slavery.

Building on Sāyfu's work and focusing not only on slave names but also on the categories used in institutions of slavery in the domestic and political realms, and expanding Teshale's *gəbər* system as material and non-material power relationships within the empire of Ethiopia, I explore the history of state formation and slavery in Ethiopia as the genealogical foundation of this book. I investigate the places and roles of slaves and captives in the making of *bəherawi*, the Ethiopian pre-modern polity, and I also study how the legacy of the discursive tradition and conceptual evolution of the pre-modern mode of politics shaped the modern state. I tell the history of state formation and power relations within the Ethiopian empire from the lived experience of these elite slaves and captives as political subjects of the empire.

Theorising Ethiopian State Formation in the *Longue-Durée*

Any theory of state formation, and any attempt to theorize state formation, should be informed by history, for theory without history produces only a caricature of the phenomena to be studied. Theory is reflected in history, but without theory history remains a mere description of empirical reality. A historical account of the state and of state formation can be a site of theorization. As Africanist intellectuals have already expounded, there is no people without history. One could further argue that no history is too weak to be a site of theorization.

My aim in this book is to write a history of state formation and at the same to theorize about it. Drawing from the renowned Ethiopian historian Tadesse Tamrat's usage, I conceptualize Ethiopia primarily as a region where many political communities have interacted to produce kingdoms, sultanates and empires. Ethiopia means nothing but the people and the civilization south of Egypt that is called, in modern times, the "Horn of Africa".

Ethiopia, as a region, was the home of many polities which interacted through differing modes of power and were connected through long-distance trade routes, the movements of people, cultural exchanges, and so on. Above all, communities in the region formed a

non-territorial empire-state, tying them together in asymmetric and dynamic constellations of power until the nineteenth century. Much has been written about each of these states and about their collective history, but often without adequate theorization.

About the history of the formation of the Ethiopian state and the nature of its political system, most scholars from both Marxist and modernization schools have applied concepts of feudalism and absolutism to trace the history of the Ethiopian state and its organization of power. Most of these scholars equate political and social formation in Ethiopia with medieval European feudalism and represent the feudal state as one of ethnic ownership, using the name “Abyssinia” to indicate a group defined by culture, and denying historical interaction between wider communities in the region. Even the creation of the modern Ethiopian state itself had been given to one linguistic group—as in Donald Levine’s bold conclusion that “the modern Ethiopian state was the creation of the Amhara”.²² It is strikingly similar to the writings of political history and state formation processes elsewhere—for example, the ethnic categories as “fixed and ahistorical entities” in the political history of Nigeria. This mode of writing does not allow an appreciation of the racial, linguistic, cultural and occupational diversity that evolved and interacted in the formation of politics in Africa.

A few Ethiopianist scholars have deployed the theory of the tributary mode of production while some others write political history without theories.²³ The well-known political scientist John Markakis has berated his predecessors for “bowing to the prerogative of uniqueness” of Ethiopia and their tendency to refrain from applying “the conventional concept and theories applied in the study of developing countries”.²⁴ He seems concerned about the

22 Donald Levine, *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

23 For instance, Richard Greenfield, *Ethiopia: A New Political History* (New York: Praeger, 1965); Sven Rubenson, *King of Kings, Tewodros of Ethiopia*, (Addis Ababa: Haile Sellassie I University, Department of History: Historical Studies 2, 1966); and homespun historians such as Täklä Šadiq Mäkwəriya. *Yä Ityopia Tarik kaaše Ləbnä Dəngəl əskä Aš Tewodros* (Addis Ababa: Tinsae zä gubaye Mätämyabet, 1949).

24 John Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of Traditional Polity* (Oxford: Clarendon

study of Ethiopia in isolation, with little comparison or theoretical formulation. The application of theories, categories and concepts developed elsewhere and, without adequate theorization, inevitably creates a blind spot that allows us to see only a misrepresentation of the reality, and silences the history. The exclusion of slaves, captives and other servile occupational groups has created a historical scotoma in understanding how power was organized in Ethiopia.

For example, the utilization of a feudal or despotic mode, or traditional charismatic state, silences the history of numerous social and political groups because it focuses on defining only the platonic trinity of classes such as those who fight, pray and produce. Representing slaves as objects in long-distance trade, or as ahistorical subjects in the domestic realm, these heuristic devices have silenced the social and political lives of slaves and their place in the intra- and interstate relationships in the Ethiopian region. Cognisant of this, Donald L. Donham states that there are many “others” whose role in the making of modern Ethiopia has yet to be told.²⁵ Those scholars who attempt to design a local heuristic device tend to cut slaves and slavery out of public history, and do not come up with social groups other than the platonic description of classes. For example, Tibebe considers the *gəbər* system as an alternative local category to explain the Ethiopian state and social history but defines it as the property of the Amhara Christian polity—despite the system being one of the central connecting elements of inter-polity relationships in pre-modern Ethiopia, bypassing linguistic and religious boundaries. Instead of using *gəbər* as the most palpable unity to undercut the primordially of identity politics in Ethiopia, his analysis operates within the politics of identity. How would Teshale explain *grāññ* (the left-handed) Mohamed demanded of *gəbər* or tribute from Christians after his victory over a Christian king?²⁶

The victors’ demand of *gəbər* from vanquished political

Press, 1974), pp.2–4.

25 Donald L. Donham, “Introduction”, in *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After*, ed. Wendy James et al. (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002), p.3.

26 Siḥab ad-Din Ahmad, *Futūḥ Al-Ḥabaša, The Conquest of Abyssinia*, trans. Paul Lester Stenhouse (Los Angeles, CA: Tsehai Publishers, 2003).

communities invites us to reconstruct the pre-modern political history of the Ethiopian region by re-reading chronicles both along and against the grain. The Ethiopian chronicles of kings and sultans, in written or in oral literature, presented as biographies, are archives of state formation, narrating the unending process through key elements such as institutions (tribute, slavery and religion) and unfolding events (war, trade and the movement of people). Some of these elements, such as the tributary mode of state formation, warrant a brief discussion, starting with the *gəbər* as an Ethiopian institution and the centre of the tributary mode of interaction.

***Gəbər* as Tributary Link in Ethiopian State Formation**

Gəbər is a *Ge'ez* concept denoting three interrelated meanings: to work or create; duty and responsibility; and something that a subject submits to the state (the labour process, the duty the subject is expected to fulfill and the thing or a service that a subject pays to the state).²⁷ The latter two indicate the power relationship. *Gəbər* is a thread between political subjects, translated through the submission and reception of something. This interdependent political relationship underlies *gəbər*, or tribute. The members of a polity submit material service and allegiance; each polity pays and receives *gəbər* in the asymmetrical constellation of power between polities. This constellation of power connected through *gəbər* is known in the English-speaking world as a tributary system or mode of production.

Tributarism is pre-capitalist, an institution of extra-economic relations between actors: collector and payer; sovereign and subject; suzerain and dependent periphery polity. For the political economist Samir Amin, the tributary mode is “the general form of all advanced pre-capitalist societies” in which European feudalism is characterized by “a developed state that goes beyond the confines of village existence”.²⁸ The Ethiopian region, as other regions in Africa such as the Sudanic, is inhabited by political communities that formed tributary links (chronicles and travel accounts provide full records

27 Kidanā Wäld Kəfle, *Māṣḥafā sāwasəw wägəss wämāzgäbā qalat ḥaddis. Nəbabu bāgəcəw fəččəw bamarəñña* (Addis Ababa, 1948).

28 Amin, *Eurocentrism*.

of many pre-modern states within the Ethiopian region).

In his productive use of the concept of *gəbər*, Tibebu argues that the *gəbər* system has no peers in Africa and even communities such as Afar and Somali had no such structure. He presents *gəbər* as an exceptional creation of the Christian Amhara Tigray civilization, despite footnoting that *gəbər* signifies Samir Amin's tributary mode of production and Karl Polanyi's redistributive system. He writes the social history of pre-modern and modern Ethiopia from one ethnic context within Immanuel Wallerstein's world system analysis in which Ethiopia was made peripheral. Samir Amin uses the tributary mode of production to provincialize Europe using historical materialism, but the historian Teshale Tibebu uses it to reaffirm the binary discourse in which Ethiopia is an exceptional civilizational other and a peculiar peripheral that resisted European colonialism. By defining feudalism as an exception to the general tributary mode, Samir Amin "provincialized" Europe.

This exposes and debunks any exceptional narrative constructed about the Ethiopian state as the only feudal and absolutist state in Africa, equated with the European past. The conceptual and theoretical purchase of feudalism became obsolete once provincialized as a European historical event, while the tributary mode of production is considered universal.

Tribute was not an exception in the Christian polities. It was a universal currency of pre-modern state formation in Ethiopia and elsewhere.²⁹ The history of diverse communities, social and occupational groups in pre-modern politics can be more intelligible if one uses *gəbər* as a historical heuristic device; it is only through this perspective that one can plausibly explain the formation of the pre-capitalist state or empire of Ethiopia. It is through this perspective that one can explain how the modern state, with development as its ethos, evolved since the nineteenth century. The modern is the gradual evolution, from tributary to commodity system, integrating Ethiopia into the global capitalist economy.

State formation in pre-modern Ethiopia is a product of *gəbər* or

29 Abegaz, *A Tributary Model*.

tribute, comparable to what Karl Marx termed commodity, a basic element of capitalism. Tribute is the basic element of pre-modern state formation in Ethiopia and the wider Afro-Asiatic world, a manifestation of the political bonds and interaction between political communities that formed the dynamic Ethiopian empire. It has no other currency; a tribute is in itself currency and the symbol of pre-modern political interaction, connecting monarch with subjects, rulers with the ruled in each state, the suzerain with its peripheral tribute-payer polity within an empire.

Pre-modern contestations between powerful empires also conditioned these dual tiers of power relations at state and empire levels. An example is the competition for hegemony in the Ethiopian region between Ottoman Turkey and Portugal, the major sultanate and major kingdom. Local, regional and international factors conditioned the formation of *gəbər* as the basic unit of state formation in Ethiopia. *Gəbər*, the tributary relationship, has no single historical origin—it evolved as a general form of process, another feature of pre-modern state formation.

Process as a Mode of State Formation

There are a number of theoretical constructions of the origin and formation of states. The correlation of warfare and state formation is an empirically justified consensus among scholars. In this book, informed by the historical accounts of power interactions in the Ethiopian region where such interactions evolved more as process than event, the making and unmaking of states is conceptualized as a processual formation. It is only in myth that states originate in magical events—otherwise they evolve in a nonlinear, very slow, competing and dynamic political process, a product of progression rather than mythical and spectacular origin.³⁰ The states which interacted in the Ethiopian region and produced the empire are not an exception; their processual state formation is animated mainly by the introduction of new religions over time.

Although the territorial and nation-state project of Ethiopia

30 John Lonsdale, "States and Social Processes in Africa: A Historiographical Survey," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2/3, (1981), p.154.

left behind the non-territorial pre-modern state formation process that had evolved over centuries, its legacy conditioned the making of modern Ethiopia as a multinational, territorial and sovereign state. The narrative is informed by a dynamic and contested history. The tributary relationship was possible because of other variables such as ideologies that helped to mobilize the masses beyond kinship links. These ideologies came from differing religious and cultural sites but their function in the state formation process was the same. Contested state formation, developed in the region between such religiously-defined political communities. Religion was, however, used only for its instrumental and ideological value in the tributary relationship at intra- and inter-state levels.

Triple Ideologies and Multiple Polities

Pre-modern states in the Ethiopian region can be seen in three forms defined by culture and religion, comparable to Ali Mazuri's African triple heritage.³¹ The first is the kingdom state which deployed Christianity as a mobilizing force to transcend other unifying forces such as kinship or competing religions. The second are the sultanates which used Islam as their unifying force. The third are the states, often addressed as "pagan", with their own religions as mobilizing ideologies which competed for power and dominance, making the region a site of continuous state formation, a process that involved violence. Tribute is a material and symbolic reason for the war between political communities. Religion caused group feeling and served as an ideological tool of war.³² The struggle was for material and for supra-material reasons, and the universal end of all wars was tribute and bondage.

The role of religion as ideological inspiration for state formation, countering other group formations, was central to the pre-colonial history of parts of Africa, an example being the process in Sudanic states. Such wars were intrinsically part of the making of the state.

31 Teshale Tibebu, "Ethiopia: The 'Anomaly' and 'Paradox' of Africa," *Journal of Black Studies*, 26 (4) 1996, pp.414–430.

32 See Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima: Introduction to History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).

Scholars such as Ibn Khaldun, Gäbrä Həywät Baykädañ, Bala Usman, Abdullahi Smith and Mahmood Mamdani focus on the interrelations between local groups (religious, occupational and linguistic) in the making and unmaking of political communities in Africa. Gäbrä-Həywät underlines the role of the indigenous polytheistic religions and the three monotheist religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam playing a role in re-initiating the state formation process in Ethiopia. The writings of the sixteenth-century Portuguese missionary and explorer Francisco Alvarez and the eighteenth-century Scottish traveller James Bruce explain the role of religion in this respect. In the long history of state formation in the region, these three political configurations emerged and competed for the power that allowed them to collect surplus in the form of tribute. War between the empire and the southern polities such as Hadeya is even mentioned in *Kəbrä nägäst*.³³

Travellers like Alvarez also listed kingdoms with the triad of religious difference.³⁴ He described states such as Masua along the Red Sea, the kingdom of Adel along the Indian Ocean coast of present-day Somalia, the kingdoms of Fatigar and of Xoa (Showa), the kingdom of Adea (Adal) which reaches to Magadaxo and the kingdom of Oyja—all of which were along the sea border and most of them described as *moors*. Though they were described as dominated by the Prester John (Christian) kingdom, some of them had conducted war against it—Alvarez described how the kingdom of Adea always made war against Christians and used to send spoils of war to Mecha and to Cairo. In the south and west of the region, Alvarez listed kingdoms such as Ganze, Gamu, Gorage, Damute, Cafates, Gojam and Bagemider that some Christians and others described as pagan.

James Bruce's list of states in the region is no different from that of Alvarez. Besides the Christian kingdom, he listed states such as Adel and Mara as the two most powerful kingdoms and mentioned

33 E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek (Kebra Nagast)* (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, 2000, p.141.

34 Francisco Alvarez, *Narrative of The Portuguese Embassy to Abyssinia*, trans. by Lord Stanley of Alderley (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1881), pp.345–346.

others such as Ifat, Fatigar, Dawaro and Hadea.³⁵ The processual state formation that preceded the modern state involved these pre-modern states, defined, inter alia, by the religious differences of indigenous, Christianity and Islam.³⁶

War, Slavery and the Formation of States

The association of war with state formation has been the most dominant argument in the social sciences. The Ethiopian region was a land of wars between multiple polities. Slaves and tribute were spoils of war. The struggle was first between the pastoralist and the peasants, the former waging war to dominate and collect tribute from the latter. Tribute, crucially important in the state formation process, was the product of war of conquest.³⁷ The mobilization of large numbers of troops was necessary to protect and expand the tributary relationship and the practice of recruiting troops from the vanquished communities—war captives and slaves—was fundamental. Elite slaves historically emerged as organized regiments collecting tribute from the peasantry while at the same time involved in tribute and territorial expansion wars on behalf of the king. War and slavery as institutional practices became an integral part of state formation.

In his retrospective theorization of state formation, the early twentieth-century Ethiopian intellectual Gäbrä Həywät wrote that war was first a product of the inclination of men who make a living from the looting and plundering of peasants. These individuals were organized under a leader whereas the peasants were less organized, living and working in dispersed settlement patterns. Organized groups—or class differentiation, to use the Marxist framework—served as the embryonic form of political rule over the

35 James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, In the years of 1768; 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772 and 1773*. Volume II (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1805).

36 See Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270–1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); and Merid Wolde Aregay, “Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom 1508–1708. PhD Diss., University of London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1971.

37 Merid Wolde Aregay, “Military Elites in Medieval Ethiopia,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 30, No 1 (1997).

peasants and of wars conducted against other societies differentiated by religion. According to Gäbrä Həywät, the ruling elite were differentiated from the masses by their will and power to live by conquest and extraction as well as by their ability to organize.³⁸

Gäbrä Həywät articulated what Antonio Gramsci later theorized as the distinction in civil society between a united ruling class and disunited masses and subaltern classes.³⁹ Political formation rested on the establishment of a ruling class and its unity, while economic formation depended on the social and subaltern groups' constant struggle to produce wealth and knowledge. The ruling class, the robber group in the embryonic stage, was transformed into tribute collector and arbiter between social conflicts—and even intervened in society, in Gramscian senses, to “educate the educator [and] the social environment”.⁴⁰

Gäbrä Həywät's theorization of the political configurations in pre-modern Ethiopia is supported by canonical text, which describes the relations between states in the Ethiopian empire. From ancient inscriptions to chronicals, all are detailed accounts of wars. Travellers recorded how conquest for tribute extraction, for the recruitment of troops from the defeated communities and for control of trade routes, was the defining element of many of these strong pre-modern states which were similar in their social stratification and utilization of religion as an ideology. Above all, most of them were attached to slaves and to the slave trade which played a major role in their emergence and survival: slaves, ivory and coffee were the main exported goods from the region.⁴¹

Alvarez described how “all the countries of Arabia, Persia, India, Egypt and Greece [are] all full of slaves from this country”,

38 Gäbrä Həywät Baykādañ, “*Aṣe Mənilək əna Ityopya*” and “*Mängəst əna yähəzəb Astādādär*” in Yä Nägadräs Gäbrä Həywät Baykādañ *Sərawoç: Näbar Merṭ Mäṣṣəft Hətmāt* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2007 (1916 EC original).

39 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1999), p.202.

40 Op. cit., p.744.

41 Taddesse, *Church and State*; Merid, “Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom”.

in high demand because “they make very good moors and great warriors”.⁴² Ethiopia, also known as the land of gold and spices (as well as domesticated animals), extended to what Alvarez called the “kingdom of the Amazons”, the present-day southern and south-western part of the region. The war between these states usually ended with booty and spoils—materials and human captives or prisoners. Elite politicians and troops recruited from slaves and captives maximized the host state’s power. States produced slaves and slaves formed more states.

Trade routes connected all these states; tribute cemented their relations—and war defined relations when the tribute system failed to connect them. War and cooperation, tribute payment and domination, trade and exchange define the history of the dealings between these states. Most chronicles and travel accounts depict the wars between them as having both material and religious causes; travellers such as Alvarez described wars between the Christians of Prester John and Muslim states, wars often concluded by plundering resources, kidnapping and the capture of the defeated as slaves. The relationship between ruled and ruler, and the inter-state relationship, can be best explained by tribute. It is the tributary relationship, rather than the feudal or Asiatic, that exemplifies the long history of production relations among these states. The search for tributes, troops and trade routes justified the declaration of war. Captives and slaves were the source of troops and political elites—if a state controlled tribute, troops and trade it was the most powerful state in the region.

The theory of pre-modern state formation in Ethiopia informs us that state formation was processual and competing, with multiple political communities differentiated by ideologies mobilized by religion beyond kinship linkages. The process involved tribute, slavery and long-distance trade as institutions. War also had a historical role in the formation of states and in the production of tribute right—and of slaves who eventually occupied high political positions.

42 Alvarez, *Narrative of The Portuguese Embassy*, p.348.

Triple Ethnographic Moments: Discourse, Political Subjects and Things

This book results from a combination of multiple approaches. It is predominantly a work of historical ethnography and genealogy, though it subverts the boundaries between disciplines. It presents history from an ethnographic perspective and combines it with the genealogy of concepts and discursive traditions. It is also a discourse analysis, but considers agents beyond their being mere speaking subjects. It is the history of the political agency of subjects under the discourse of slavery in pre-modern times and its development in the modern state, seriously considering development not only as discourse but also as symbol, playing a role beyond production and distribution in shaping political relations. It creates triple ethnographic moments of discourse, subjects and things.

In this book, documents such as chronicles, newspapers, religious and literary works, novels and archival evidence, memoirs, travel accounts and biographies are all read as ethnographic sites, similar to the ways in which critical readers of archives read colonial or other forms of records. I have benefited substantially from Ann Stoler's reading of colonial archives and newspapers, and was influenced by Nancy Rose Hunt's reading of fiction as a site of archive ethnography and remembrance to disrupt temporality.⁴³ I have read documents from the thirteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, mainly chronicles and, later, newspapers, primarily to make the ethos of the state intelligible. Then there are the popular texts of the pre-modern, mainly *Fäkkare Iyäsus* because it is a popular and religious text deployed as the modern state's ethos, perhaps complementing, if not replacing, the *Käbrä Nägäšt* (Glory of Kings), the old pre-modern legitimizing document or constitution of the Christian Ethiopian kingdom.

This book relies on an examination of selected *Ge'ez* and Amharic concepts and an exploration of the semantic changes they undergo as part of the Ethiopian historical and political process. Concepts have history; in his famous dictum Friedrich Nietzsche

43 Nancy Rose Hunt, "Between Fiction and History: Modes of Writing Abortion in Africa" *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, Vol. 47, Cahier 186 (2007), pp.277–312.

states that “all concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated defy definition; only that which has no history can be defined”.⁴⁴ In this book, a genealogy of concepts enables navigation through pre-modern history, on the assumption that the conceptual history can make intelligible the political history of the present. Concepts are rarely defined here. Instead, the book explores what they represent across time as reflections of socio-political changes. Use of the power of concepts to tell a new story does not rely on the assumption of essential consistency and the organic fixity of a concept across time. Concept and meaning can be analogously described as body and spirit. Multiple meanings attached to concepts are like multiple spirits that reside in the body of concepts. A concept with a liquidated meaning is like a body without a spirit until society gives it a new one.⁴⁵ Most of the concepts dealt with in this book are live concepts whose changing meanings still play a role in the present.

This contingent conceptual linkage across centuries of historical periods is brought to light after the reconsideration of a genealogy of slavery and state formations following Fernand Braudel’s *longue durée*.⁴⁶ My focus is a *longue durée* of “pre-modern” before the second half of the nineteenth century. By identifying slavery as a form of subjection in the pre-modern, the book explores its legacy in the disposition of modern political subjects through a new discourse of power such as *sərat*, *śəlatane* and *ləmat* which traced the ascendancy of development as the ethos of the modern Ethiopian state in the second half of the nineteenth century when the colonial encounter, coupled with imagination, made and consolidated the “modern” Ethiopian state.

In this genealogical exploration, I have tried to create triple ethnographic moments in a more comparative manner by reading

44 See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.53.

45 See Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*; Kābbädä Mika’el. Śəltane Məndən Nečč? (Addis Ababa: republished by Aynlem Publishing, 2000 (1957 original).

46 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Richard E. Lee, *Fernand Braudel, the Longue Durée and World-Systems Analysis* (Albany, SUNY Press, 2012).

the documents as “monument” and subject, without reading them as a source for other knowledge or hidden meanings.⁴⁷ I present the emergence and evolution of concepts and discourses such as slavery and development, and have embedded the conceptual evolution as part of the discursive analysis, hoping to contribute to global and African conceptual history or *Begriffsgeschichte*.⁴⁸ What makes conceptual history important is that it focuses not only on the historical evolution of concepts and their meanings but also on the historical consciousness of subjects—or the intellectual, in the Cambridge school sense—and in the wider context, including the popular forces in the German tradition. The current volume brings together two seemingly incompatible traditions: the Foucauldian genealogy of discourse and the conceptual or intellectual history of Reinhart Koselleck as well as that of Quentin Skinner. In calling on the two traditions to guide my analysis I have benefited considerably from Alasdair Macintyre’s seminal work *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy and Tradition*.⁴⁹

Taking the local agents and actors beyond their being mere “speaking subjects”, unlike the tradition in discourse analysis, I write of the historical displacement of subjects such as slaves, and of captives, and the eventual emergence of new subjects such as intellectuals. This history of displacement of the old and emergence of the new political elite I attribute to the emergence of development as the ethos of the modern state of Ethiopia. In addition to conceptual history and pre-modern chronicles, legal documents and literary texts, modern newspapers and novels capture the intellectual and the popular articulation of developmentalism and the mode of politics it has

47 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp.139–164; and Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2, 2002, pp.87–109.

48 See Rhiannon Stephens and Axel Fleish, “Introduction,” in *Doing Conceptual History in Africa*, ed. Rhiannon Stephens and Axel Fleish (New York: Berghahn, 2016), p.16.

49 Alasdair Macintyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

created. There was some readership for the writings of the intellectuals which allowed for the convergence of the intellectual and the popular political groups. As in other African countries, since the late nineteenth century the writing of novels or newspapers was “connected to regimes of reading ...”.⁵⁰ This was a continuation of the discursive tradition of the pre-modern. Popular texts such as *Fəkkare Iyäsus* gradually articulated with writings such as that of the pioneering historical novel or epic, *Ṭobyā: Ləbb wälläd Tarik* (A story born of the heart). In terms of content and genre, both represent the discursive tradition connecting the past and the future through prophesy.

However, this linking of pre-modern and modern writings does not connect the encounter between the unchanging traditions represented through *Fəkkare Iyäsus* with the dynamic historical writing of the modern represented by *Ṭobyā*. It is problematic to assume that, as James De Lorenzi states, “the inherited tradition” or “vernacular historiography” as a mode of writing was gradually replaced by new modes of writing with new forms of historical inquiry and imaginations”.⁵¹ The changes and continuity witnessed in modes of writing were part of the evolving discursive tradition conditioned by the political and social changes of the time. In terms of imagination, for example, the modern forms of writing that evolved following *Ṭobyā* display a similar ethos to that reflected in pre-modern texts such as *Fəkkare Iyäsus*. The diverse texts of the pre-modern and modern became united through the discourse of progress and development that prophesied the future.

Since the late nineteenth century, most texts prescribed the construction of a modern Ethiopian utopia of civilization, progress, enlightenment and modernity. These universalized concepts are not foreign to the writing and imagination of the Ethiopian pre-modern discursive tradition; the popular ideas of justice, equality, peace, fraternity and improvement were part of the discursive tradition to

50 Karin Barber “Introduction: Hidden Innovators in Africa,” in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self* ed., Karin Barber (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2006), p.2.

51 James De Lorenzi, *Guardians of the Tradition: Historians and Historical Writing in Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, University of Rochester Press, 2015), p.27.

the extent of shaping modern state developmentalism.

Ethiopian writing since the nineteenth century represents the articulation and re-articulation of pre-modern popular ideas such as progress, rather than what James De Lorenzi described as “the domestication of the idea of progress through historiography”.⁵² Though such writings represent “an Ethiopianized history of progress” through articulation, negotiation and translation between the past and present, between global and local ideas, they were not mere domestication. Some writings became the voices of the popular movement speaking truth to power.

In this articulating process, newspapers were important sites of the personal and collective writings of many people from different walks of life. The newspaper *Bərhanənnā Sälām* had a substantial readership and was distributed widely. In Ethiopia, as in the history of authorship and readership in other parts of nineteenth-century Africa, “forms of sociality were built around reading which was seen as an edifying and civilizational activity”.⁵³ This sociality is a convergence zone for the intellectual and the popular, defying the exceptional role played by the narrative of the intellectual as the pioneer of change.

The reconstruction of history as subject to exceptional agents of change has also been a tendency in wider African historiography. For example, like Bahru Zewde and James De Lorenzi, Karin Barber also considers writers as “hidden innovators”, often “socially precarious and culturally isolated in their textual pursuits ... pioneers, working out new forms of creative expression”.⁵⁴ Intellectuals and popular forces were part of the ever-changing discursive tradition in the multiplicity of political and social histories. Borrowing from Grant Farred’s description of the vernacular intellectual, I consider the

52 Op. cit., p.38.

53 Karin Barber, “Introduction: Hidden Innovators in Africa.” In *Africa’s Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, edited by Karin Barber (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), p.2.

54 Op. cit., p.3; See also Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford and Addis Ababa: James Currey and Addis Ababa University Press, 2002); De Lorenzi, *Guardians of the Tradition*, p.5.

intellectual role to be similar to that of the Gramscian organic intellectual: rooted in communities, the vernacular articulates an equivocal relationship to hegemony, a complex negotiation with the dominant group that is characterized by a self-conscious difference and defiance.⁵⁵ My narrative is of the mediatory role of the intellectuals in the process of articulation and negotiation between the hegemonic and the popular in the history of Ethiopian state developmentalism.

To achieve this, my book connects conceptual study and imagination from literary works with the mainstream historical narratives, including works by homespun intellectuals.⁵⁶ It emerges from a synchronic view of conceptual and social stories, meanings and practices, and then historicizes and contextualizes these stories using a diachronic historical narrative in the Ethiopian region. This is an attempt to connect history with literary imagination and meanings derived from the concepts of slavery. The book uses *Ge'ez* and Amharic categories of slavery as philosophical and phenomenological concepts in order to explore the place of slaves in the public space—similarly, it examines a genealogy of the concepts used to articulate development since the late nineteenth century. The concepts are read not only as instruments of control but also as indicators and historical sources to explain the social and political place of slaves.⁵⁷ These concepts, however, appear abstract without ethnographic data, which the mainstream historical literature can hardly provide. Therefore, *Fakkare Iyäsus* (as a popular literary work of the pre-modern) and Afäwärq Gäbrä Iyäsus's *Tobyä* (the first Amharic novel, published in 1907), and slave narratives, mainly Alämayähu Mogäs's historical novel *Gäbrä Mäsqäl Bariyaw*, are used as the ethnographic sites.

55 Grant Farred *What's My Name? Black Vernacular Intellectuals* (Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p.12.

56 Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macola. *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009).

57 In framing this study of concepts, I am informed by Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*; Pierre Bourdieu, "Symbolic power", *Critique of Anthropology*, 4 (77), 77–85 (1979); and Melvin Richter. *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

Reading these historical novels and fiction as ethnography, I have learned much from Nancy Rose Hunt's works, mainly her reading of fiction for archival knowledge of abortion. She argued that fiction should be read "*for form*—for the density and duration of description and spatial renderings, and for distortion of sequential order".⁵⁸ The historical novel *Toby* allows me to subvert the modern/pre-modern boundary, not only because of its imaginative retrospective construction of the state formation in the *longue durée*, but also the multiple social settings of the narration. The book was also written as a prescriptive text to shape the present and future of national politics. Using *Toby* and other literary works opened the possibility for what Hunt calls "out of order sightings" which, "whether retrospective or anticipatory, can serve to unsettle linear empty time and introduce textual effects evoking temporality, whether about memory, consequences or different points of view".

Toby and other literary works and essays are read as the popular imagination portraying major public events such as the formation of the pre-modern Ethiopian state and its implications for social and domestic realms. The social and cultural richness of *Toby* retrospectively depicts social stratification, mobility, religious difference and war in pre-modern Ethiopia. *Fəkkare Iyäsus* is both descriptive of pre-modern events and anticipatory of the "future". The two texts serve as diachronic and synchronic ethnographic sites.

The historical novel of *Alämayähu* connects the domestic and public realms as a space of bondage between master-slave (the *geta-barya* relationship) and demystifies the *geta-barya* and slavery/freedom binary, framing them as a human socio-political, relational continuum. The conceptual discussion and imagination of the literary works are compared with mainstream historical sources such as chronicles and travel accounts in order to rethink the boundary between historical and literary works.

.....
58 Hunt, "Between Fiction and History".

Slaves in the Emperor's Palace — Rethinking Pre-Modern Ethiopia

AT THE HEART of the pre-modern political world, slaves occupied important political positions under the sovereign ruler in Ethiopia. At the centre and at the periphery of each state, from palaces to battlefields, from the centre of tribute extraction and to distribution, slaves were political actors. Slavery was an institution of recruiting political subjects such as administrators, palace guards, troops, court writers and advisers—from those who used the pen to those who used the sword. The language of slavery was the language of power that connected the ruler, the intermediary and the ruled. This logic of power was universal to pre-modern tributary states. Slavery was central to most tributary states in the Ethiopian region where kingdoms, the sultanates and the chiefdoms relied on it to reproduce organized power in their contest for hegemony.

Emperors, Slaves and the *Zega*: Formation of the Ethiopian State and Subjects

A history of state formation in the Ethiopian region can be told from the interactions of the trinity of emperors, elite slaves and the *zega* (subjects): the emperor represents the royal ruling class including the officials in the court, palace and church. The elite slaves are the troops and the officials at the court and the palaces, recruited from among war captives. The *zega* represent the masses, mainly the peasantry who cultivate the land. In the theory of state formation, these comprise the trinity of the tributary state: tribute payers or

subjects, the ruling class or tribute collectors and redistributors, and the intermediary elites or elite slaves.

The peasantry were small landowners, known in Amharic as *balagär* or *baläge*. This class represents the masses or the *zega* defined, inter alia, by its position at the bottom of the hierarchy of power. It is the producer class that pays tribute to the state, having a direct political relationship with the tribute collector, either the elite slaves stationed in the homeland of the peasantry or their vassal king who submitted to the emperor or sultan in the suzerain-tribute payer relationship.

The elite slaves, mainly the soldiery recruited from the vanquished community, were often stationed in new community areas as tribute collectors and fighters in times of war. Historians consider them professional soldiers because a considerable amount of the tribute they collected was used for their livelihood.⁵⁹ In the language of power, however, they were bonded to the emperor who recruited them as spoils of war and who saved them from domestic slavery and from the slave trade out of Ethiopia. They entered the political realm as troops and politicians (a political position was dependent on loyalty to the emperor whose powers also depended on the effectiveness of the relationship). This interdependency between emperor and elite slave is central to the formation of the state in the Ethiopian region.

Elite slaves were known in history as *čäwa* (in Amharic), *šewa* (in Ge'ez). Comparing the *čäwa* with the *baläge* (peasantry), the renowned medievalist historian Merid Wolde Aregay states that “whatever and wherever his origin, the landless soldier was the *čäwa*, the elite and gentleman, whereas the landholding peasantry was *gäbbar*, the tribute paying serf”.⁶⁰ Occupying this intermediary position, slaves played a key role in the state formation process and everyday pre-modern politics. It is incorrect to call this system feudalism.

59 Merid, “Southern Ethiopia”; Tadesse, *Church and State*.

60 Merid, “Military Elites”, pp.31–73.

Pastoral Power in Private and Public Realms:

A Theory of *Géta-Barya* Relations

The Amharic term *barya* means slave, popularly defined as a person without freedom, seemingly a derivative of the Atlantic model, which has been a template for writing the history of slavery in Africa. It also served as a base for a political solution as a form of abolitionist discourse.⁶¹ A genealogical exploration of local concepts warrants historicizing slavery and servile relations in Africa. Concepts can be used as “navigational instruments” to make history more intelligible.⁶² Like “signs and things”, concepts are not mere representations of their present meanings but, rather, sites from where we retrospectively see socio-political changes across time. They depict the past in the present when we study their historical change of meanings.⁶³ Social and political formations involve the creation of structures, practices and new meanings. Such correlation between social and conceptual change indicates that symbolic forms are not mere instruments of cognition but also of power relations; and conducting such conceptual genealogy may contribute to the debate on the conceptualization of slavery as well as to the search for a universal definition of slavery. As reaching consensus on conceptual debate is difficult among scholars, the more pragmatic way out is to mobilize local terms as analytical concepts to study the historical context.⁶⁴ The historicization of concepts related to slavery in Ethiopia helps not only to narrate a particular history of slavery but also to break the historiographical silences and misrepresentations.

Ethiopia is an African state with a long political history and written tradition. Its periodization mirrors the Eurocentric divisions of world history into ancient, medieval and modern. Ethiopian

61 On Atlantic slavery as a template from literature in slavery scholarship in Africa, see Ann McDougall, “Discourse and Distortion: Critical Reflections on Studying the Saharan Slave Trade”, *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre Mer. Traites et esclavages: Vieux problèmes, nouvelles perspectives?* Special issue ed. Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau (2002), pp.55–87.

62 Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p.129.

63 Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*, p.6.

64 Suzanne Miers, “Slavery: A Question of Definition,” *Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 24, 2 (2003), p. 11.

writing has been dominantly composed in Ge'ez, known as the Latin of Ethiopia and, later, in Amharic. In this chapter, I draw on chronicles mostly produced since the reign of the “king of kings” Amdä Sion (1314–1344) in order to trace the conceptualization and the semantic expansion of political and social concepts. Concepts in Ethiopian slavery such as *barya* and *čäwa* have social and political purchase and shed light on the history of slavery and the politics of state formation which, as well as the setting of hierarchical relations and related social differentiations, involved the production of new meanings, values and symbols that challenged kinship-based power and social relations.⁶⁵

Slavery, according to Claude Meillassoux, developed in combination with many other historical factors, including the states with their ideologies.⁶⁶ Similarly, in pre-modern Ethiopia multiple historical events and the evolution of political processes were combined with the history of the *barya-geta* (slave-lord) power relationship. My entry point into this historical interrogation, however, is from the conceptual, discursive and ideological; the production of concepts and their semantic changes are used here as a site from which to explore slavery as an integral element of the process.

Two terms in particular, *barya* and *čäwa*, depict the historical formation of the state and the associated development of institutions of slavery. *Barya* represents the institution of slavery in Ethiopia, while *čäwa*, which refers to an army active from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, epitomizes the institution of an elite slavery placed in a wider sovereign-subject, lord-bondsman or *geta-barya* relationship. *Barya*'s semantic shift correlates with the captivity of a community called *Barya* into Axumite slavery; similarly, *čäwa*'s semantic change correlates with the historical making of the *čäwa* army out of captives and conquered peoples of the Horn. The production of slaves with an ideology of otherness,

65 Christine Ward Gailey and Thomas Patterson, *Power Relations and State Formation* (Washington D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987).

66 Claude Meillassoux, “The Role of Slavery in the Economic and Social History of Sahelo-Sudanic Africa,” in *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies*. Edited by Joseph E. Inikori, (London: Hutchinson, 1982). p.99.

and the deployment of these slaves and captives in the political formation, brought the issue of integration to the forefront. Hence, the conceptual genealogy poses questions about the construction of otherness and the integration process in the making and unmaking of slaves in Africa.

It is worth engaging debates in African slavery scholarship written through the binary of domesticity-slave trade and integration-otherness. It is also relevant to question the Atlantic thesis as a model on which scholars construct their history of African slavery, and at the same time it is equally important to navigate within the silences in trans-Saharan slavery by bringing back the story of slaves beyond commercial history and placing it in the history of Ethiopian state formation. This perhaps fits with Hubert Gerbeau's assumption of the possibility and desirability of writing about slavery in relation to civilization.⁶⁷

Contemporary political and symbolic expressions of both *barya* and *čäwa* differ in their etymological meanings and their use across the pre-modern era. In the modern Amharic world, *barya* is an individual detached from their community, living outside their original place, and who was purchased or captured in war and forced to work like an ox. This category of person lives under the will of a master and has no freedom.⁶⁸ A *barya* is also seen as an unfree person alienated from their home community. Such conceptualization is a homogenizing tendency, perhaps resulting from the adoption of the narrative of "universal" slavery, or the hegemonic assumption that upholds the idea that "no definition of slavery can be separated from the definition of its antithesis—freedom".⁶⁹

In the colonial era, *bariyanät* represented colonialism, a

67 Hubert Gerbeau, "The Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean: Problems Facing the Historian and Research to be Undertaken," in *The African Slave Trade from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century: The General History of Africa Studies and Documents II* (Paris: Unesco, 1979), p.184.

68 Täklä Wäld Dästa, *Addis Yä Amarañña Māzägäbä Qalat* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printers, 1970) p.195.

69 Miers, "Slavery: A Question of Definition," p.2. Such a definition, according to Miers, is generated from chattel slavery, which in itself has a diverse form defying homogenization.

collective and national subordination to foreign rule.⁷⁰ In the twentieth century, the term *barya* came to signify a person in a condition of *bariyanät*, the absence of freedom and democracy. *Bariyanät* is a dehumanizing condition in which an individual lives under the arbitrary will of another, unable to make decisions, having a master to think on their behalf. *Ləmat*, or development, on the other hand, is a condition that cultivates the human element of decision making about the self. Today, *bariyanät* represents the worst form of a patronizing political system or power relationship derived from the Atlantic model. Semantic expansion is not only a socio-historical reflection but also a conceptual translation and adoption of imagination and articulation. Understanding the contingent and historical shift of local concepts is necessary in order to debunk the homogenizing imposition.

Barya is also used popularly today as a term of endearment given to a person with a dark complexion. A lighter-skinned person is addressed as *käyo* (red one) and the darker-skinned person as *bariço*. *Barya* used in any other way is historical, as is the expansion of its meanings. The term *barya*, as a variant of a nickname on one hand and as a political and social condition on the other hand, has a prehistory; this duality in today's meaning of *barya* is the past in the present. Depending on the changing material and institutional setup, meanings transmute and expand when one navigates backwards into history. The term is contingent, reflecting historical power relations and resisting a singular definition. It is analagous to Friedrich Nietzsche's explanation of concepts as historical products.⁷¹

Over time, *barya* in Amharic replaced the *Ge'ez* term *gäbər* for slave: *Yä Šəllase barya* instead of *Gäbrä Šəllase* (slave of the trinity) and *Yä Maryam barya* instead of *Gäbrä Maryam* (slave of Mary)⁷² are like Arabic names prefixed with *Abdi* or *Abdu*, indicating a slave or

70 In the post-Italian occupation period of the 1940s, colonialism was interpreted popularly as the experience of *bariyanät* to mean absence of national freedom; see, for example, the article “*Säw Bagäru Bizu näw Kəbru*” in *Addis Zämän* no. 2 (1933).

71 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, p.53

72 Säyfu, “*Yäbarya sām bä’ amaraw baḥəl*”, p.139, and Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*.

a servant to the metaphysical figure. *Barya* as a personal name in the historic Ethiopian (Amharic and Tigreñña linguistic) world also reflected submission to a metaphysical figure.

Perhaps the oldest meaning of *barya* is a name for communities in the region south of Egypt. In the fourth century, communities such as the Nara were sources of slaves for Aksumite kings.⁷³ Greek and Roman classic works deployed similar terms such as *Megabari*, *Megabaroï*, and *Adi-abari* to refer to the community of Troglodytes/Trogydtes, Nubae and Blemmyes inhabiting the land south of Syene.⁷⁴ The term *megabari* itself was used to refer to communities as Ethiopians or subjects of Ethiopians,⁷⁵ communities living south of Egypt, pastoralists and cave-dwellers alike. The root term *bari* is also used to construct the name of a river, *Astaboras* or *Atabara*, meaning river of *bora* or *barya*.⁷⁶ There are other communities who use a similar term, such as *barim* in southern Sudan bordering Ethiopia, and in a place called *wambarya* west of Gojjam and bordering Sudan.

In historical writing there is a tendency to represent slaves as dark-skinned, both a stereotypical and a historical expression and one which I call a linguistic act. The conceptualization of *barya* as a “black” slave bonded to a “red” master and as the antonym of a free person is a product of modern historiography: the “writing of history by analogy”⁷⁷ and “writing race into history”.⁷⁸ *Encyclopedia Aethiopica* defines *barya* not as a symbol of subjugation and of racial inferiority but as the opposite of *čäwa*, a “civilized, free human being”. The textbook scholarly work on reproducing this racial narrative is Richard Pankhurst’s work on slavery and borderland people.⁷⁹ Despite the attempt to bring the “peripheral subject” back

73 John Kenrick, *Ancient Egypt Under the Pharaohs* Vol. I (London: Richard and John Edward Taylor, 1850).

74 Frank M. Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p.117.

75 Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands*, p.27

76 Säyfu “Yäbarya sām bā’ amaraw baḥal”.

77 Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Johannesburg and Kampala: Wits University Press and Makerere Institute of Social Research, 2007, p.8.

78 For comparative purposes, on the national history of Sudan see Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p.75.

79 Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands*.

into mainstream historiography, Pankhurst's thesis on slavery appears less plausible for at least two reasons: first because of his subscription to the hegemonic binary narrative in Ethiopian slavery historiography, the household slavery in Ethiopia and the slave trade out of Ethiopia, mainly to the Arab countries. Pankhurst argues that "slaves played a major role in the *domestic economy* of the Christian and Muslim realms ... [and] contributed one of the region's most *valuable exports*". Most scholars have framed their historical reconstruction with this binary discourse. One of the earliest scholars on Ethiopian politics, Margery Perham, contends that Ethiopians' belief in the Mosaic Law informs their "right to enslave other races" although, reproducing the orientalist "Arab slavery" narrative, she blames the surrounding Muslim states and their proximity to Arabia as factors for perpetual enslavement in the region.⁸⁰ Harold G. Marcus also reproduces the narrative, arguing that slaves were domestic servants within Ethiopia and became objects in the long-distance trade out of Ethiopia, but noting that in Arabia and Egypt they served in both the public (such as in the army) and the domestic arenas: "Middle Easterners long had bought Ethiopian slaves for their armies, their fields, their homes, and their beds." Around the eleventh century "there was a large slave trade, especially to Egypt, where Ethiopians were used as soldiers".⁸¹ Orlando Patterson also presents Ethiopian slavery as an exemplary form of domestic slavery.⁸² Bahru, again reproducing this binary, writes that "[t]he enslavement of peripheral groups—whether it was for domestic service or external trafficking—was the norm".⁸³ Slavery is written as a story of domesticity and as a story of the marketplace, or "a paragraph in commercial history", to use Gerbeau's phrase.⁸⁴ Pankhurst's work reproduces this misrepresentation. In his narrative, the centre-periphery is not only naturalized but also racialized as an interaction between black and red people. In his interpretation,

80 Perham, *The Government of Ethiopia*, pp.217–36.

81 Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p.13.

82 Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*.

83 Bahru, "The Challenge of the New Millennium," p.42.

84 Gerbeau, "The Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean".

“the racial connotations of slavery in Ethiopia, which were long afterwards to have their parallel in North America and elsewhere, appear to have been reinforced after the advent of Christianity in the fourth century AD by perusals of the scriptures.”⁸⁵

Pankhurst uses the fifteenth-century Ethiopian document *Fəṭḥa Nāgäśt* (Law of Kings) to justify how racially-based slavery was supported by Christianity and also rationalized by law. According to the *Fəṭḥa Nāgäśt*, however, slavery is a result of war rather than nature, skin colour or a curse. “[The state] of liberty is in accord with the law of reason, for all men share liberty on the base of the natural law, but war and the strength of horses bring some to the service of others, because the law of war and of victory makes the vanquished the slaves of the victors.”⁸⁶ Law made the slave, not nature, and hence it is similar to civil slavery, the opposite of Aristotle’s natural slavery. Like the Greeks who believed that only non-Greeks could be enslaved, Ethiopians believed that only foreigners and vanquished unbelievers were potential slaves.

Pankhurst reproduced “writing race into history”, to use Mahmood Mamdani’s expression, by invoking the story of Noah who cursed Ham and his son Canaan to be servants and blessed other sons, Shem and Japhet, to be served by Canaan. Pankhurst localised this story using *Kəbrä Nāgäśt*, a thirteenth-century *Ge’ez* document that depicts the kings of Ethiopia as descendants of Shem and therefore chosen to rule. For him, Ethiopian slavery formed the pre-history of European Atlantic slavery; this coincides with the view of Mbaye Gueye, who wrote a pre-modern history of the African slave trade which Europeans did not invent (although they exploited it). For Gueye, the difference between African and Atlantic slavery is primarily the scale of the trade, the former being on a much smaller scale.⁸⁷ Similarly, I.B. Kake produced a work on the African small-scale slave trade as the pre-history of large-scale after the fifteenth century.⁸⁸

85 Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands*.

86 Zadua Paulos, *The Fetha Nagast. The Law of the Kings* (Addis Ababa: Haile Selassie I University, 1968), p. 75.

87 Gueye, “The Slave Trade Within the African Continent”, p.150.

88 I.B. Kake, “The Slave Trade and the Population Drain from Black Africa to North Africa and the Middle East,” in *The African Slave Trade from the*

Kəbrä Nəgäśt, however, is about the justification of state power in the expanding kingdom, not about race-based slavery. It is intended to justify the title of rulership over commoners rather than to rationalize mastership over slaves: “For by the Will of God the whole of the kingdom of the world was given to the seed of Shem, and slavery to the seed of Ham, and the handicrafts to the seed of Japhet.”⁸⁹ Any invocation of the term *barya*, servant or servile condition is applicable to the mass of the ruled community, not to a racially distinct community, if there is any. The emperor ruled “upon wise and lazy, upon *Agaeztiha* [free] and *Agbrtiha* [slave]”.⁹⁰ The hierarchy of power within the state was articulated through the use of the biblical language of lord and slave, without displacing the institution of slavery.

In pre-modern Ethiopia, if *barya* signifies otherness, it was more a form of cultural and religious alterity than of racial difference. It connotes an institution and discourse of marginality as a kinship/ religion continuum in African societies.⁹¹ Religion as the state ideology justified state power against kinship, and religiosity as a discourse served associated institutions such as slavery and tributary relations. The king is represented as God’s anointed power to rule over the masses whereas nonbelievers are seen as candidates for slavery, although manumission and the payment of tribute may help them to escape. The practice of manumission operated within the logic of cultural and religious purification and applied to both slave and non-slave marriages, leading to the manumission of the offspring. The status of the offspring also changed across generations through intermarriage with non-slaves — which defies the race logic superimposed on the history of Ethiopian slavery.

Historically, the term *barya* — as a name for a community, and

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Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century (Paris: Unesco, 1979), pp164–74.

89 Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba*.

90 William Conzelman, *Chronique de Galâêwdewos (Claudius) Roi d’Éthiopie*, Ethiopian text trans. and annotated. Paris, 1895, p.2.

91 Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, “African ‘slavery’ as institutions of Marginality,” in *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspective*, edited by S. Miers and Igor Kopytoff (Madison, WI: Wisconsin University Press, 1977).

signifying subjection and slavery—expanded semantically to refer to a slave person. This change of meaning entailed the correlation of semantic change to social stratification.⁹² The seventeenth-century Ge'ez dictionary *Lexicon Aethiopico-latinum* is the first to record the association of the term *barya* with social status. Kidanä Wäld's, Ge'ez-Amharic dictionary, published in the 1940s, presents *barya* as synonymous with the Ge'ez term *gäbar*, a peasant or worker who is forced to give his labour and wealth to a *shum*, or lord, an office holder who can act according to his will on *barya*. This dictionary also lists it as a synonym for a similar term, *gäbär*, someone who is a captive, or bought, or a *wälaj* (a creole born from the union of a slave and non-slave).⁹³ In this conceptualization, the notion of property, geographical alienation and otherness, as well as suffering and resistance, are absent. *Barya* is here attached to *shum*, a state official or authority, assigned to collect *gäbär*. *Barya* is not defined as the opposite of freedom.

The *Lexicon Ge'ez-Latin* defines *gäbär* (pl. *agbirt*) as *servus* (*macipim, minister, famulus*). All signify slave, servant or servile status in the pre-modern sense of the term. As a result of semantic expansion, *barya* eventually began to denote a class of people such as slaves, captives, peasants and those in other servile groups. It depicted the multiplicity of servile positions and replaced the Semitic term *gäbar* (the commoners who pay tribute to the upper class). *Barya* also began to signify the power relationship between a bondsman and *shum*.

Barya or *gäbär* manifests the power relationship between two oppositional players in a society: the sovereign and the subject, lord and slave, God and believer, God and the unholy spirit. The term is therefore primarily a description of power relationships rather than a racial and phenotypic description of dark-complexioned people who are doomed to natural slavery. This does not mean that power relations do not operate in phenotypic or cultural representations but, rather, that the core meaning of *barya* is submission, bondage and servility. The nature and mode of servitude and servile relations

92 Dästa, *Addis Yä Amaräñña Mäzägäbä qalat*.

93 Kidanä Wäld, *Mäṣḥafä säwasaw*, p.297.

expressed as *bariyanät* (being *barya*) have their own particularity in the *Ge'ez* and Amharic world, defying the homogenization of the concept in slavery scholarship and writing on African slavery as well as on the history of Atlantic slavery. The genealogy of this particular term *barya* as applied to the spectrum of socio-political status can be abstracted in two forms: profane and sacred power relations. Indeed, *barya* can be a marker of a sacred relationship. First, in Christianity all human beings are considered slaves of God and other metaphysical beings such as angels. *Yä Šállase barya* (slave of the Trinity) and *Yä Maryam barya* (slave of Mary) are names that indicate this relationship between human and metaphysical figures. In Christian Ethiopia, everyone, including the king and nobility, is *Yä Igziabəher barya*—a mere slave of God.⁹⁴

Non-Christians, on the other hand, were considered to be lost sheep and the slaves of the devil, and the justification for enslaving them was the mission to bring back the lost sheep through baptism and acculturation. When slaves were captured or bought, the master gave them new names, replacing their birth names. In the Amharic linguistic world, slaves had a particular name and function reflecting the power relations between them and their masters. Only when a slave was baptized and acculturated was he or she considered for manumission; one step in this process was renaming the slave using the term *barya* or *gäbər*. The freed slave-name usually signified the slave's entry into God's dominion with other commoners. The relationship between God and believers is communicated through the word *barya*. Christian names in Ethiopian languages signify this subjugation to God.

The evil spirit or devil is also considered as *barya*, additionally a name for a disease caused by the devil. For instance, epilepsy is considered *yä barya*, caused by or belonging to *barya*. Pankhurst argues that such deployment of the term as an expression of the psychology of the “red” people is explained by fear and suspicion. Others argue that it humiliates people everywhere, equating them with slaves, making the status of the epilepsy patient as low as that of

94 Säyfu “*Yäbarya sām bā’ amaraw baḥəl*”, pp.134–35.

barya.⁹⁵ The view of epilepsy as a devil's disease may, however, relate to the belief that devils persistently attempt to conquer humankind. The "Parable of the Two Slaves" in *Kəbrä Nəgäśt* is an insightful story in which a king had two slaves, one arrogant and strong, the other weak and humble. The king intervenes when the strong slave conquers the weak. Here, the king represents God, the strong slave is Satan, and the weak and humble slave is Adam, whom God saved and glorified.⁹⁶

The profane power relationship signifies the connection between *geta* and *barya*, or between lord and slave. Since antiquity, society has undergone social stratification, mainly through organized force. Ethiopian society used the term *barya* to indicate the servile place of the individual or of groups in relation to the lord. At worst, the *barya* subject can be considered an object, a chattel, less 'human' in the modern Western sense.⁹⁷ *Barya* can be an opposite or other to the human: *yä-sāw ləj*.⁹⁸ It may be benign or violent but it has never been homogeneous and cannot be explained by the singular narrative of Atlantic chattel slavery.

The term *barya* has multiple connotations in the profane *geta-barya* relationship. Servile individuals and groups can be found in differing social and political hierarchies and places, from the domestic to the political realm, the kitchen to the battlefield, and farmland to church or mosque. The Ethiopian people can be considered as *barya* to the king, but this indicates a symbolic power relationship.⁹⁹ The *Kəbrä Nəgäśt*, including its use of biblical stories, could be about how stories serve power; it justifies and presents the glory of the king and his rulership over the mass of people as God's will. As Svein Ege notes, "The king was the master of lives and land ... everybody being the king's slave."¹⁰⁰

95 Säyfu, "Yābarya sām bā' amaraw baḥāl", p.140.

96 Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba*, p.183.

97 Kopytoff and Miers, "African 'Slavery'".

98 Säyfu, "Yābarya sām bā' amaraw baḥāl", p.140.

99 See Säyfu's discussion of the name of human versus the name of slave. The same dichotomy is discussed in Somali culture in Säyfu, "Yābarya sām bā' amaraw baḥāl".

100 Svein Ege, *Class, State and Power in Africa: A Case Study of the Kingdom of Shawa (Ethiopia) About 1840* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996), p.97.

In addition to describing the relationship of the king to his people, *barya* was also used to refer to the power distinction between higher officials and subordinates. In the chronicle of emperor Amdä Şəyon, a Muslim king of Šäwa was described as “the slave of slaves against the prince of princes, the tail of the dog against the head of the lion”.¹⁰¹ Here, *barya* refers to the power connection between the Christian king and the Muslim imam, a pagan whose status is *barya* to the king. The concept of *barya* is largely symbolic, expressing the asymmetric power relation and submission; lower officials would sign “from your *barya*” in writing to top officials.¹⁰² The king was usually addressed as *geta* (lord). The word *geta* can be used not only for God but also for any respected head of a household; it is not surprising to hear a wife addressing her husband as *getoč*. Similarly, a man’s slaves addressed him as *getoč*. It is only in relation to God that the king became a *barya*.

The term *geta* also refers to lordship over land and house: *yä-betu geta*, lord of the house. Master in Amharic is understood by the term *barya asadari*, lord of a slave. The term *asadari*, however, refers to hosting rather than owning a captive; it expresses the domination and the cultural and religious superiority of the *geta* and the dependency of the *barya*, a power that emanates from *mārko* or captivity. In the domestic realm, the *geta-barya* relationship signifies the dynamics of evangelization, acculturation, teaching and training to the non-Christian bought or captured; this power relationship also has a pastoral power dynamic in which the head of the household has a salvational mission over his slaves.

Geta had the power not only to enslave but also to free a slave from captivity, usually for a religious reason.¹⁰³ When a *barya* was freed, he became a slave of God like his master, often signified by his name. Ethiopian slavery invoked a spectrum of otherness to

101 George Huntingford, *The Glorious Victories of Amda Seyon, King of Ethiopia*, trans. and ed. G.W.B. Huntingford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.59.

102 Säyfu, “Yäbarya sām bā’ amaraw baḥāl”p.139.

103 Alämu Hayle, *Yä Aše Särša Dəngəl Zena Māwal Ge’ez əna Amarəñña* (Addis Ababa :Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCC), 1999).

justify itself. Integration into a host community was presented as a paradise that slaves could achieve when they were freed. The discourse of otherness and the eventual integration reproduced the institution of slavery. The spectrum fits in a complex way with the thesis of the “slavery-kinship continuum” in wider African societies because otherness as defined by religion served as an ideology of slavery. However, this otherness would fade away, as institutions of slavery ensured the process of baptism, acculturation and eventual integration of the slave into society, thereby expanding the slavery-kinship continuum into the slavery-religion continuum.

The religious discourse used to create a new future for a slave constructed a utopia—and was a function of integration into a host community, eventual manumission and salvation of the soul in the hereafter. The debate between scholars regarding the slave as a separated other and as a member of kinship through integration could perhaps be resolved if the two are considered as on a spectrum with alterity and integration as extreme points of the same historical process. Otherness was needed as an ideology to produce and maintain slavery in African society but at the same time integration through kinship or religion was needed for the same purpose, the production and maintenance of slavery as an institution. A new slave in a host society could be defined by his or her otherness whereas integration and absorption explained his or her social status—the integration process happened very quickly for some slaves and captives who became soldiers in Ethiopia. As elsewhere on the continent, otherness defined by religious difference explains the production of slaves as well as the process of state formation. Psychological, cultural and religious discourses are natural parts of the institution of slavery.¹⁰⁴

Elite slavery and religion were instruments available for the formation of the state playing out against kinship (the idiom and the metaphor of social and political relations),¹⁰⁵ provincial pacts and counter state-formation projects. The history of slavery is therefore

104 See Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*; Kopytoff and Miers, “African ‘Slavery’”, p.22.

105 Ibid.; see also Säyfu, “*Yäbarya sām bū’ amaraw baḥəl’*”.

part of the history of state power: ruling and being ruled correlate with lordship and servitude. In the pre-modern Ethiopian case, it is instructive to look at the history of the *čäwa*. The relationship between the emperor and the *čäwa* army is an example of the *geta-barya* or slave-master relationship in the political sense, which defies the representation of Ethiopia as the home of domestic slavery only, as articulated by Patterson, for example. It has been presented as a mode of production (as labour process at home and slave trade) coexisting with the hegemonic “feudal” mode of production.¹⁰⁶ Shedding light on the political better explains, perhaps, the social stratification, since “the secular struggle between classes is ultimately resolved at the *political*—not at the economic or cultural—level of society”.¹⁰⁷

Čäwa: Captivity, Royal Army and Gentry

The term *čäwa*, or *šewa*, is one of the oldest political concepts in Ethiopia, traceable back to the Axumite period. It is derived from the Ge'ez word *šewäwä*, to take as captive.¹⁰⁸ Since the thirteenth century it has signified a soldier. The *čäwa* military system, with numerous regiments, was the royal army, comprising the best captives of vanquished communities in the region.¹⁰⁹ The connection between the king and the *čäwa* is the *geta-barya* power relationship in the public space, which is parallel to that between the head of the house and a *barya* kept in the house.

In post-eighteenth-century chronicles and political discourse, the term *čäwa* referred to “gentry”, a status achieved by assignment to office rather than hereditary royal line. The *čäwa* were called *mäkwannänt*, or imperial appointees. The term *yä čäwa läj* (child of the *čäwa*) in this period refers to descendants of the historic *čäwa* army. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, despite the change

106 Wolde Mariam Tekalign, “The Slave Trade in the Economy of Jimma,” paper presented at the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, (Addis Ababa, 1984); and Timothy Derek Fernyhough, *Serfs, Slaves and Shiftas: Modes of Production and Resistance in Pre-Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2010).

107 Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, p.11.

108 Kidanä Wäld, *Mäṣṣafä säwasaw*, p.772; and Dästa, *Addis Yä Amarəñña Mäzəgäbä qalat*, p.602.

109 Merid, Southern Ethiopia; Taddesse, *Church and State*.

in the nature of the army, the name *čäwa* persisted, signifying a section of an elite with authority and also a “civilized” class (as opposed to the *zega* or commoners and subjects). The military and administrative professions inherited from *čäwa*’s forefathers served as markers of the *čäwa* elite. Just as the notion of *barya* semantically shifted to denote a slave, the term *čäwa*, once used to signify a captive, shifted in the period between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries to indicate a soldier — and, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to indicate a higher class of nobility than the *zega* or the general population.

The semantic expansion of *barya* was a product of the enslavement of the Barya community by the Axumite state. It is then logical to deduce that the semantic change to the term *čäwa* resulted from the use of captives and slaves for the royal army. The social formation and mobility within society must have dictated the semantic shift of the term *čäwa*, the meaning of which term shifted as slaves occupied elite positions. This is seemingly an Ethiopian version of Nietzsche’s “slaves’ revolt in morality”.¹¹⁰

The occupational distinctions between *čäwa* as gentry and *zega* as subjects in the nineteenth century, however, were rooted in the formation of the *čäwa* as a distinct army, as recounted in the chronicles written from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, including those of king of kings Amdä-Šəyon (1314–1344), Zära Yacəqob (1431–1458), Bə’ədä Maryam (1468–1478), Gälawdewos (1543–1559), Šäršä Dəngəl (1563–1597), Zä Dəngəl (1603–1604), Susənyos (1607–1632) and Iyasu I (1682–1706).

Čäwa was also one of the ten classes (*šota*) that made up Ethiopian society, distinctive by its occupation as fighters.¹¹¹ Ethiopian society was divided between *čäwa* which historians considered as a professional army (because they were not only fighters but also tribute collectors) and the peasant or commoner, the *zega*.

110 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, p.18. Nietzsche described morality in association with revolt or “the slaves’ revolt in morality” in Western society.

111 Getachew Haile, *Yeabba bahriy Dirsetoch Oromowchin Kemimelketu leloch Sanadoch gar* (Addis Ababa, 2002).

The Čäwa Army and the Making of Pre-modern Ethiopia: 13th to 18th Centuries

Yəkunno Amlak (1270–1285), a king born to a slave mother, changed the pre-modern political history of Ethiopia. He defeated the Zagwe dynasty and brought to power the Solomonic dynasty. He was the first emperor to use the title *Nəgusä Nəgäšt zä Ityopya* (king of the kings of Ethiopia, hereafter emperor), recognising numerous kings under his power who were bonded through tributary links.¹¹² The tributary relationship was a tradition through which the Ethiopian state engulfed territories and made numerous polities and communities tributary to it.

Yəkunno Amlak laid the ground for the southward expansion of the state and for the “glorious victories” by king of kings Amdä Şəyon (1314–1344) whose rule was defined by territorial expansion, the maximization of royal revenue from tribute and trade and by royal caravan participation in the trade route that connected the Horn with the Red Sea and Indian Ocean world.¹¹³ From the thirteenth century, the kingdom’s bureaucracy and the power of the monarchy grew stronger and extended their territory, defeating kingdoms and other attempts at state formations. What Fukuyama has termed the “competing state formation process”¹¹⁴ explains the war between organized communities in the period involving Christian kingdoms, sultanates and other kinship-based resistance. The struggle between the kingdom ruled by Solomonids and the Adal sultanate was dominant in the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, when the latter defeated and controlled the region.¹¹⁵ Portuguese and Ottoman Empire competition in the Indian Ocean world increased and also influenced this kingdom and the sultanate struggle. Historians have

112 Taddesse, *Church and State*, 66; E.A.Wallis Budge, *A History of Ethiopia, Nubia & Abyssinia According to the Hieroglyphic Inscriptions of Egypt and Nubia, and the Ethiopian Chronicles* (Oosterhout: Netherlands, Anthropological Publications, 1970).

113 Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia and the Red Sea: The rise and Decline of the Solomonic Dynasty and Muslim-European Rivalry in the Region* (London : Frank Cass, 1980).

114 Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Time to the French Revolution* (New York; Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2011).

115 Alvarez, *Narrative of The Portuguese Embassy*.

given scant attention to the place of slavery as a power relationship and to its impact on political formation before the advent of the modern state of Ethiopia in the nineteenth century in the Horn of Africa—reconstructing the history of the *čäwa* captive army in the making of the Ethiopian state appears to be a plausible start.

The *čäwa* army was a defining military institution for the success and, later, the decay of the Ethiopian state. The history of the “glorious victory” of Emperor Amdä-Šəyon would not have been written in the annals of Ethiopian history without the prodigious role of the *čäwa* soldiers, who were predominantly captives and slaves in a time when “vanquished warriors of Damot, Ənarya, Hadya, Ifat and other southern provinces” beyond Šäwa were recruited as army regiments.¹¹⁶ These and “newly conquered pagan communities provided an inexhaustible source of manpower for [a] growing army”.¹¹⁷ The chronicle of Emperor Bă’ədä Maryam (1468–1478) reveals how he conquered the rebellious Dabea community, killed some survivors and captured others who appealed for mercy; the emperor accepted their pleas, forced their conversion to Christianity, rewarded them with livestock and from among them formed a *čäwa* army named *Dawit Amba* (David’s plateau).¹¹⁸

The tradition that endured from the ancient Aksumite to the medieval empires and sultanates was the use of slaves and captives as the source of the state army. Recruiting elite slaves from a defeated community is the institutional legacy of the Aksumite empire. It was also a tradition during the Aksumite period to relocate rebellious subjects and defeated enemies to new territory, removing them from their homeland and community.¹¹⁹ Sources such as *Futūḥ al-Ḥabaša* describe Nubian slaves who fought against the Muslims in the sixteenth century. Such accounts indicate the place of elite slaves and captives as part of the *geta-barya* relationship, which defined the political within the *gəbər* system, signifying the coexistence of

116 Merid, “Southern Ethiopia” p.82

117 Tadesse, *Church and State*, p.89.

118 Alämu, *Yä Ityopya Tarik: Yä Aše Zära Yacəqob əna Yä Aše Bă’ədä Maryam Zena Mäwal*, p.34.

119 Merid, “Southern Ethiopia”, p.82.

slavery and the tributary system. As did the Sudanic states such as Darfur and Funji, the competing states in the Ethiopian region must have reproduced themselves by deploying slaves for the army and recruiting them as political elites as well.¹²⁰ But I want to return to the chronicles of the Ethiopian kings to expound further on the political formation and use of the captive army.

Čäwa is a ubiquitous political term of pre-modern Ethiopia. Chronicles written since the thirteenth century are literally accounts of court life—the mobility of the royal court and military engagement in conquering, in forming tributary relations, in looting and in enslaving the *zega*.¹²¹ They predominantly depict the power of the sovereign and his role in the making, deployment and also the demobilization of the *čäwa*. Most chronicles depict state-making campaigns, which involved *čäwa* as an extension and instrument of the power of the emperor, God's anointed monarch and midwife of a stable *Īgziabəherawit mǎngəšt*, God's state on earth.¹²² The chronicles also present fragmentary accounts of utterances and political statements of the *čäwa* army against the emperor. The voice and political discourse that involved the *čäwa* and other servile subjects can be made intelligible by reading chronicles both along and against the grain. Reading *geta-barya* power relations as a discursive subject or “monument” reveals the subjection of both the *geta* and the *barya* in multiple power relations. This new story of *čäwa* and *barya* defies the representation of slaves as domestic, pre-political subjects or, in terms of the marketplace, as apolitical objects whose story can be captured only through the paradigm of mode of production. I read the discourse of the *geta-barya* power relation in each chronicle more as ethnography and as a subject in itself than as a source of knowledge or hidden meanings, without reducing the agents to mere speaking subjects.

The *čäwa* army has been represented in Ethiopian

120 Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p. p.135

121 Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Royal Chronicles* (London :Oxford University Press, 1967); Sven Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

122 Alämu, *Yä Aše Särša Dəngəl Zena Mäwal Ge'ez əna Amarəñña*.

historiography as a professional army: military regiments stationed either in what historians call military colonies or garrisons in frontier provinces, or serving as a convoy to the mobile royal court which was represented as a royal bodyguard battalion or “palace guard”. The frontier army was seen as the provincial army and the garrisons as the local army, representation based on the mobility and deployment of the *čäwa*, either in the palace to serve and protect the royal court or in frontier territories as a defensive wall protecting the feudal empire. Historians may have overlooked the connection between the emperor and the *čäwa* in their analyses, mainly because they did not read the chronicles from an ethnographic perspective.

Etymologically, the term *čäwa* entails captivity and was later defined as *yä-näpus aškär* (a servant of the king) and a soldier.¹²³ To be a member of *čäwa* as *barya* to the emperor was very different from being a slave or captive person; it was one way of legally escaping domestic slavery. The notion of *čäwa* as a servant of the emperor entails both servility and entitlement, as the *čäwa* stood between the free man and the slaves, above the *zega* or free commoners. *Čäwa gən bä baläge layə täsäri* means that the *čäwa* is someone who rules over the *baläge* or *zega*—however, this status rests on the complete dependency of the *čäwa* on the emperor. *Čäwa* as an army of the emperor controlled an office for the collection of tribute from stationed areas, preying upon the *zega* stationed at an old locality of the kingdom or at areas newly incorporated as a result of expansion. This also indicates the difference between the *čäwa* and the *zega*, who were non-fighting subjects. It is worth mentioning Emperor Bä’ädä Maryam’s commanding the Dabea community not to own instruments of war; he advised them to cultivate, instead.¹²⁴ Ownership of instruments of war seems to be a social marker of the *čäwa* against the *zega*.

The *čäwa* appears to have been a territorial army stationed in the provinces as frontier regiments, although not all *čäwa* soldiers were provincial office holders. Some were stationed within the palace.

123 Dästa, *Addis Yä Amaräñña Mäzägäbä Qalat*, p. 601.

124 Alämu, *Yä Ityopya Tarik: Yä Aše Zära Yacəqob əna Yä Aše Bä’ädä Maryam Zena Mäwal*, p. 37.

Emperor Zära Yacəqob's chronicle, in particular, paints the role of the *čäwa* army as a defensive and ceremonial corpus of the royal court. Some members were regularly involved in state-making wars. When stationed at the palace, the *čäwa* were granted the privilege of either sharing the war booty with the emperor or ruling over the peasants as tribute collector, in exchange for military and political service. The chronicles of Amdä Şəyon, Şärşä Dəngəl and Susənyos present detailed accounts of such state-making military expeditions.

Historians see the mobile *čäwa* army as an evolutionary extension of the stationed or garrisoned *čäwa* army, and the permanently stationed army as a corrupt form of the mobile army and a “barbarization” of the “professional army.”¹²⁵ The stationing of the royal court at Gondar marked the beginning of the end of the monarchy despite the establishment of the historic city of Gondar—which was also a centre of rebellion of both *čäwa* and *barya*. The *čäwa* army revolted against emperor Iyasu's (1682–1706) ambition to expand the territory beyond the Nile, one of the infamous instances of political control and the revolt of a *čäwa* slave army called *wəlalaj* (1706–1721). This political crisis eventually led to the end of the monarchy: Täklä Giyorgis (1779–1784) was the last emperor of the Gondarian period and the Solomonic dynasty.¹²⁶ Our conceptualization of the emperor-*čäwa* relationship as one dynamic in the wider *geta-barya* political relationship not only shows how the emperor ruled over *zega* through the *čäwa* but also how the *čäwa* as a political group was involved in resistance and political contestation, irrespective of the hegemonic discourse of *geta-barya*.

The military-slavery elements in the formation, deployment and demobilization of the *čäwa* army of pre-modern Ethiopia can be summarized by five aspects of elite slavery. First, and most common, was the violence in the *čäwa* army's beginnings as war captives. The semantic change from “war captive” to “soldier of the king” is not only a logical but also a historical process. The use of the words

125 Merid, “Southern Ethiopia”; Abir, *Ethiopia and the Red Sea*.

126 Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2000).

“prisoners of war” and “captives” in the imperial army was the legacy of the Axumite period. The claims of King Ezana for taking captives as booty after he conquered neighbouring communities were left on his inscriptions. In his chronicle, Emperor Susənyos left a remark after a war: “I attacked the Boren and I killed many and enslaved their wives and children. I also ransack[ed] their livestock.”¹²⁷ Chronicles of other emperors document slaves and captives as booty of numerous unending wars and account the recruitment of *čäwa* from the captives. Susənyos concluded by saying, “Numerous horsemen and other armies submitted to me”, while Emperor Bă’ədä Mariam recounted the making of *čäwa* out of the Doba community and the demobilization and remaking of an army out of a rebellious *čäwa* army, *tänač*.¹²⁸ Violence was at the core of the *čäwa*, as it was to the social formation of slaves in Ethiopia and elsewhere.¹²⁹

The second aspect of elite slavery was that the *čäwa* army was an army of survivors that entered into political affairs as an alternative to death or to slavery, either in the domestic arena or on the long-distance trade routes. The *čäwa* army, commanded by the head *azəmač*, was connected to the emperor. As the defining element of *čäwa* as *yä nəgus asəkär* (a servant of the king), the *čäwa* soldier has been described as an extension of the emperor’s power.¹³⁰ Emperor Zära Yacəqob told the numerous *čäwa* regiments, “Live according to law and order as given by God. Stop your cunning behavior; otherwise we will punish what we wish and as [it] pleases us,” signifying how slavery and religion, consent and coercion combined to produce a discourse of power.

The third aspect is that *čäwa* army members were alienated from their homeland and defined as foreign elements in the geographical sense, becoming politically significant only as a result of their bondage to the emperor. In pre-modern Ethiopia, therefore, the formation and deployment of the *čäwa* were based on linguistic identity. The chronicle of Zära Yacəqob accounts for how “the *čäwa*

127 Alämu, *Yä Aše Susənyos Zena Mäwal*.

128 Alämu, *Yä Aše Särša Dəngəl Zena Mäwal* Ge’ez əna Amarəñña.

129 Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*.

130 Ibid.

armies sing in their own respective language” in the palace. One of the *čäwa* soldiers, Zä-Šəllase, who played a significant role in the politics of the state in the early seventeenth century, was seen as *mäsātāñña* (guest or migrant).¹³¹ Such expressions of othering depicted the *čäwa* army and their descendants as socially and geographically alienated subjects who did not belong to *balagär* (natives who owned *rəst*, hereditary land rights). *Hägär* (Amharic) or *bəher* (Ge'ez) entailed a kind of ancestral land similar to the *Dar* tribal homelands of Sudanic states.¹³² The marker of *hägär*, however, about kinship rather than language, allowed different *hägäroč* or *bəheroč* homelands within one linguistic group, either Amharic or Tigrigna speakers, signifying that homelands were not defined by linguistic identities. Most of the captives were recruited from non-Christian and linguistically different communities, and such social status was politically significant to their formation as elite captives in the power politics of the Ethiopian state.

Fourth, the *čäwa* army as captives were also vulnerable to genealogical alienation since castration was a practice frequently inflicted upon the vanquished. The Ge'ez term *hašəwa* connotes cutting or mutilation of the organ, while *žandäräba* connotes the official status of the person in relation to the sovereign emperor.¹³³ Another important related term is *bäcal dāräba*, the name of the chief of the eunuchs. It is difficult to determine the number of eunuchs within the *čäwa* regiments. Eunuchs were usually given the official title of *žandäräba*, but they also occupied other higher positions below the emperor—*žandäräbas* were among the palace officials loyal to Emperor Zära Yacəqob.¹³⁴ One of the provincial governors of the emperor Susənyos, Gojjam Nägaš Kəflo, was not only an alienated subject as a descendent of *čäwa* from Dawaro (one of the southern provinces of the empire) but also a eunuch whose dead body was placed for public show as punishment for his

131 Alämu, *Yä Aše Susənyos Zena Māwal*, p.83.

132 Mamdani, *Saviors and Survivors*, p.114.

133 Kidanä Wäld, *Məšəfä säwasəw*, p.484; Dästa, *Addis Yä Amarəñña Mäzəgäbä Qalat*, p.99.

134 Alämu, *Yä Ityopya Tarik: Yä Aše Zära ;acəqob əna Yä Aše Bə'ədä Maryam Zena Māwal*, p.16.

revolt.¹³⁵ Exposing Gojjam Nägaš's social status even after his death was a means of dishonoring him and showing the powerlessness of eunuchs who were disloyal to the emperor. According to the late sixteenth-century monk and intellectual Abba Bahərey, one of the ten classes of Ethiopian society comprised the retainers and protectors of royal women—he is possibly referring to eunuchs. *Haṣəwa* or *žandäräba* of royal women (for example, *haṣəwa* of the sixteenth-century queen, Säblä Wängel, a wife of Emperor Ləbnä Dəngəl) were genealogically alienated subjects occupying a distinct political position. The eunuch of Queen Säblä Wängel was notable in bringing the upcoming emperor, Śārṣä Dəngəl, to power.¹³⁶ The politics of eunuchism must have been part of the political in pre-modern Ethiopia, deserving a thorough study. Sometimes, however, *čäwa* who were not eunuchs had the potential to reproduce, which complicates Meillassoux's thesis that slaves do not reproduce themselves. The *čäwa* as a distinct army of slaves and captives could reproduce itself, and the position of serving the emperor could also be transferred to a *čäwa*'s descendants.

The presence of *wəlaḥ* (a concept that refers to an army made up of the offspring of slave and non-slave subjects) is worth mentioning here.¹³⁷ The following lyric about a descendent of a *čäwa* who, in time, lost his power and honour, will perhaps expand the argument.

A disgraced son of *čäwa*,
To fetch firewood
Descended into *kola* [lowland]
He will burn it the whole night
What he gathers in the daylight.¹³⁸

This is a *qəne*, which in Ethiopian poetry has two meanings: the surface meaning is *säm* (wax) and the hidden one *wärq* (gold). In this poem, the descendant of the *čäwa* army has lost his honour and is fetching firewood. He should have fought and collected tribute, like

135 Alämu, *Yä Aše Susənyos Zena Mäwal*, pp.133–38.

136 Ibid.

137 Ignazio Guidi, *Annales Iohannis I, Iyyasu I, et Bakaffa*. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orinetium, Scriptores Aethiopici, Series Altera, vol 5. (Peeters Publishers, Belgium, 1903)

138 Dästa, *Yä Amarəñña Mäzəgäbä Qalat*, p. 601 (translation by the author).

his father, but he does what peasants do and, by gathering firewood, becomes part of the *zega*. The secret meaning is about how he lost his power and honour. The last verse, *qān yāsābārāwn* (what he gathers in the daylight) also signifies disgrace. This *qəne* expresses the temporal status, the distinct occupation and the honour of the *čäwa* class at the same time. When a *čäwa* member or his descendant lost his power to serve the emperor, or broke his bondage with the emperor or the emperor's descendants, one of his fates was to integrate into society as a peasant. This exemplifies the integration aspect of the story, while their recruitment depicts their otherness in society.

The fifth element of the *čäwa* system was the reciprocal relationship between the sovereign and the *čäwa* that counters Orlando Patterson's description, in his chapter on "the ultimate slave" in *Slavery and Social Death*,—of an elite slave as a relatively powerless subject lacking honour, irrespective of his political role.¹³⁹ The extent of dependency of the *čäwa* on the emperor owing to the above four elements, and the reverse dependency of the emperor on the *čäwa* to rule over the *zega* and to win over his nobles, is the antithesis of the theory of the ultimate slave. This, made evident from fragmentary accounts in the chronicles written during the time of the *čäwa* rebellion, is what John Iliffe calls "the paradox of slavery in Africa, as elsewhere", where the master's power is dependent on the slave.¹⁴⁰

The *čäwa*'s motto "we live with our lord and we also die with our lord" reveals the level of dependency of the *čäwa* on the emperor. The contrasting "let me rule in my land and you rule in your land without any king" was uttered by *Čäwa* soldiers after the killing of Emperor Zä-Dəngəl, who attempted to mobilize the *zega* against the *čäwa*, and affirm their political status without the king. Later, however, they brought a king named Yacəqob, whom they could manipulate, to resist the power of the would-be emperor, his cousin Susənyos. By influencing the politics of succession, an elite slave could mobilize a power base.

The chronicle of Susənyos also recounts a rebellion made by

139 Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, pp.299–333.

140 John Iliffe, *Honor in African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.137.

čäwa and *barya*. “One of the most dishonored and impoverished among all [*barya*] slaves in Susənyos’s palace named Mälkä Şadəq revolted and mobilized slaves and descendants of slaves as well as *qurbans* and children and grandchildren of the *qurban*.¹⁴¹ “Dishonourable”, as it is used here, refers to his political act, challenging the anointed king of kings, rather than his condition of slavery. The rebellious slaves and *čäwa* led by Mälkä Şadəq tried to enthrone another king—but *čäwa* armies in solidarity with the emperor crushed the revolt. In Susənyos’s chronicle, the cause of the revolt was slave-led banditry. The moment *čäwa* soldiers broke their allegiance they fell into slavery. Susənyos’s comment was seemingly a response to those rebellious *čäwa* who tried to live, act and rule in the political realm without the emperor. Of the rebellious *čäwa* army he said, “Let us not go to them; they will be demobilized since they have no king.” A *čäwa* army without a bond with an emperor seems to have been an apolitical, powerless and illegitimate group, but this was an ideology of power that juxtaposed institutional hierarchy in the state with slavery. No powerful person, slave or non-slave, could assume the throne of the king of kings without the ideology of the Solomonic dynasty. The political strategy of those strong men without royal blood was to produce weak kings by assuming a king-making position and controlling the power to determine political succession. The end point would be a weak emperor and powerful elite slaves ruling over the Ethiopian state, as in the case of Emperor Yacəqob and his *čäwa* king makers.

The *čäwa* army needed the emperor, just as the emperor needed the *čäwa* to assume political power, to enjoy the privilege of ruling over the *zega* and to maintain a stable state protected from internal power struggles and external intrusion. The story, on one hand, of the rebellious *čäwa* who successfully killed the emperor and the unsuccessful revolt of Mälkä Şadəq, and, on the other hand, the attempt of emperor Zä-Dəngəl to mobilize the *zega* against the *čäwa*, are historical moments depicting the attempt to break the bondage and reciprocal relationships by building an alternative power base.

141 Alämu, *Yä Aše Susənyos Zena Mäwal*, p.92.

It was not only the king of kings as a master who had the political capability to “secure his domination” owing to his “independent base of power [and] support of the third party.”¹⁴² Such historical events also challenge Patterson’s universal definition of a slave as a dominated person without power, birthright or honour.

The political slogan of the *čäwa* army against Emperor Iyasu (1682–1706) illustrates the interdependence of the emperor and the *čäwa*. The *čäwa* army refused to take orders for further territorial expansion from the ambitious emperor, and they said, as Hiroki Ishikawa put it in English: “We will not cross [the ‘Abawi river] for the love of our lands. Why are we afraid of abandoning our service in the region, which will bring us death? Aren’t we [*gəuzan*] free, as it is said vulgarly that *säb həra wä gäbbarä mædr* [man is free, land is tributary]?”¹⁴³

This saying shows how the *čäwa* of Iyasu I aspired to lose their position in the captive army of the emperor (with all associated privileges and costs), and attain political freedom. By invoking the phrase “free person”, the rebel *čäwa* army attempted to erase the contract they had entered at the point of a sword, when they were captured. When they joined the royal army, they avoided being killed, traded or sold as domestic servants. This historical moment allows us to question Patterson’s assumption that freed men were the first to struggle for freedom and his argument that there was an absence of both a “free” person by law and a “word for freedom in most non-Western languages before contact with Western peoples”.¹⁴⁴

This reconstruction of the story of elite slaves and the *čäwa* revolt in the bondage system of *geta-barya* power relations undermines the representation of the same revolt in the historiography as strikes by professional soldiers or the Pretorian movement of the *mäkwannənt* class within Ethiopian feudalism.¹⁴⁵ The political crisis

142 Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p.333.

143 Chronicle of Iyasu I, quoted in Hiroki Ishikawa. “Changes in the Military System during the Gondar Period (1632–1769): Their Influence on the Decline of the Solomonic Dynasty,” In *Annales d’Ethiopie*. Volume 18, année (2002), p.220. See also Guidi, *Annales Iohannis I, Iyasu I et Bakaffä*, p.190.

144 Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p.342.

145 Merid, “Southern Ethiopia”; Crummey, *Land and Society*.

that led to the collapse of the Ethiopian monarchical state in the late eighteenth century involved all three institutions of the state formation and consolidation process: religious controversy within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church,¹⁴⁶ the crisis in tributary relations and the collapse of the *čäwa*-emperor bondage. All happened in the global context of intervention by the Ottoman and Portuguese empires when invasion from the sultanate of Adal and the attack by Oromo groups created the crisis in tributary relations. The crisis in the politics of bondage and, institutionally, the deterioration of the *čäwa* military system following the reign of Šäršä Dəngəl (1563–1597), explain the disintegration of the kingdom as one of the core states in the Ethiopian region. The breaking of the bond between the emperors and the *čäwa* army—or the complete collapse of elite slavery—weakened the tributary link, the ascendancy of slavery, looting as a royal source of revenue during emperor Susənyos's reign—and the eventual decay of the empire.

146 Taddesse, *Church and State*; Crummey, *Land and Society*; Abir, *Ethiopia and the Red Sea*.

History Meets Fiction: State Formation and the Making of *Barya* and *Geta*

AT THE START of the twentieth century a new mode of writing began in Ethiopia with the publication of *Tobyia*. Fiction began to complement the chronicles and hagiographic writings of the pre-modern era. The retrospective imagination of these works makes them invaluable for reconstructing the remote past. Much of this new form of writing has immense ethnographic value, especially for an understanding of themes such as slavery and servility.

Written in 1907, *Tobyia* is known in Ethiopia as the first piece of Amharic prose fiction. Its original title was *Ləbb-Wälläd Tarik* meaning a historical fiction; it was subsequently published as *Tobyia*, the name of the main female character. The story of *Tobyia* recounts the history of Ethiopia, from the times of peace to the times of trial and tribulation, and the reversion to peacefulness. This periodization is defined by an episodic historical narrative which reconstructs past events, allowing what has been called the “distortion of sequential order”¹⁴⁷ in narrating the nation’s history through the biographies of the protagonists. Yonas Admasu, the prominent humanist and scholar of Ethiopian literature, described *Tobyia* as a literary work recounting the manner in which the nature of the ruler evolves from that of a warrior king to that of protector, and how the objective of political relationship changes from religious to secular and fraternal interaction.¹⁴⁸

147 Hunt, “Between Fiction and History”.

148 Yonas Admasu, “Narrating Ethiopia: A Panorama of the National Imaginary”: Ph.D. Diss., University of California, 1995, p.128.

Alämayyāhu Mogäs's *Gäbrä Mäsqäl Bariyaw: Tarikawi Ləbb-Wälläd*, another historical novel, is one of the few Amharic books on slavery. It is written as a biography but its subject is the production, use and manumission of slaves, as well as the life of the *zega*, or commoner. It questions the various Amharic and Ge'ez categories of freedom and liberty, and is highly valuable as a source for the study of slavery and other forms of servile relationships in pre-modern Ethiopia.

In both *Ṭobyā* and *Gäbrä Mäsqäl Bariyaw* history meets fiction and both are a plausible source of ethnographic materials.¹⁴⁹ Through their imaginative and descriptive powers, these two authors provide a detailed account of power in households and in politics, covering state formation, war, slavery and many other forms of servile relationships in the pre-modern world.

***Ṭobyā*: Reading Pre-Modern State Formation in a Modern Fiction**

The book tells the history of a family, progressing from a romantic beginning to tragedy and back to a happy ending, and interwoven with the narratives of state formation and war. In *Ṭobyā*, Afäwärq depicts not only the political history of the country but, more importantly, presents the social history, the making of *barya* and *geta*, slave and lord, in multiple and dynamic systems of power. If one wants to read the ethnography of pre-modern power in the Ethiopian region, *Ṭobyā* is an apposite text. Some scholars read it as prophetic of Ethiopia's attempt to modernize in the Western manner,¹⁵⁰ but my reading of the novel (similar to that of Yonas Admasu) is as a representation of the past—because the narrative line resembles the passage of Ethiopia's history—rather than a reference to the future.

In *Ṭobyā*, Afäwärq tells a story of state formation which provides a structural setting for the life experience and political subjugation of the characters. Ethiopian first-generation Western-educated scholars were preoccupied with the political even when producing texts of a different genre and form. *Gäbrä Həywät*

149 Beverley Southgate, *History Meets Fictio* (London: Longman, 2009).

150 Messay Kebede, *Survival and Modernization – Ethiopia's Enigmatic Present: A Philosophical Discourse* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1999).

Baykādañ, one of the few scholars of the time, theorized about the state and development while telling the story of the family, the individual and household, tying the ethnography of state formation to that of social life. Afāwārq, for example, shows how an individual's subjective but dynamic life experiences change with those of society. Conversely, he also depicts the possibility of historical and political events changing through the action of an individual, irrespective of that individual's social status as either *geta* or *barya*. The entire story depicts the changeable positions of lords and slaves, soldiers and captives in the public and political realms where an individual's status changes from that of nobility and mastery to that of slave and captive. In this imaginative work, classes of people are framed not only by their social and religious status but also in their political and administrative roles.

Ṭobyā is a young woman, a Christian. The story is about her fate, and the fates of her twin brother and her mother, told in the historical context of the unending battle between two political communities defined by religion: the Christians and the non-Christians considered to be infidels or pagans. This historical and political context is situated in what the author calls the era of the gospel defined by conflict, looting, plundering and, in general, a state of war. In the words of Yonas Admasu, Ṭobyā takes a “chunk of history” and “fictionalizes” it, whereas the aim of *Kəbrä Nəgäst* and others is “historicizing a mythical past”.¹⁵¹

My task here is to mine Ṭobyā for the history and ethnography of power that it fictionalized. In Afāwārq's dramatized historical account of national tragedy, with its killing, enslavement, looting and plundering, there was no peace or stability in either political or community spheres — only recurring violence between territories. It was something of a Hobbesian state of nature in which war and military strength defined order and power. Afāwārq used the Amharic term *hägär*, a homeland, signifying locality and wider geographic spaces, Christian and pagan *hägär* standing for the highland and the lowland parts of Ethiopia respectively,

.....
151 Yonas, “Narrating Ethiopia”, 129.

corresponding to the highlands and lowlands as a homeland of contending polities within the Ethiopian tributary empire. The highland-lowland and the peasant-pastoralist, differentiated by religion, were at loggerheads—again, corresponding to the peasant thesis and the pastoralist antithesis in Ibn Khaldun’s historical work. The synthesis is a new state or tributary relationship. The constant making and unmaking of “group feeling”¹⁵² in the region energized the wars that drove the process of state formation in Ethiopia, a central element of which was the ideological role of religion in mobilization and unification.

In this historical period, the Christian *hägär* was ruled by pagan might. The author’s historical imagination is interpreted by Messay Kebede as accepting of Western superiority and the future domination of Ethiopia—however, the descriptions in the novel and the utilization of the notion of *arämäne* (pagan) applied to non-Christian Ethiopians makes Messay’s reading implausible; and if we compare the narrative in the novel with the history of Ethiopia we find instances (mainly in the fifteenth century) in which Muslim and other religious groupings dominated the Christians. Chronicles and hagiographies often document these wars between Christian kingdoms and non-Christian polities and sultanates—for example, the *Gädl* or hagiography of *Abunä* (father) Täklä Haymanot begins with the defeat of a Christian kingdom by the pagan kingdom Damot. This beginning must have influenced the way the story begins in *Ṭobyä*. In the *Gädl* the mother of Täklä Haymanot became the captive of a pagan warrior king.

The defeat of the Christian army in a war against the pagan makes for a tragic start to the novel. The war has caused destruction, killed three generals and led to the enslavement of *Ṭobyä*’s father, a commander in the Christian army. The destruction has led to psychological devastation for the Christians and to the death of their king. The Christian *hägär* is now a land without a king, a barren land.

152 Ibn Khaldun’s notion of *assabiyah* an Arabic concept to mean group feeling, or solidarity, was necessary for superiority in wars. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddima: Introduction to History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 97–98.

In the history of pre-modern Ethiopia, there were several moments when kings were killed in a battle from which either the sultanate's army or that of another polity emerged victorious.

With enslavement and captivity, the commander, previously *geta*, becomes *barya* or slave to the pagan polity he had fought against. Deceived by his physical appearance, the pagan victor and master had hoped to exploit the labour of the new Christian slave in the domestic arena, but the former general, a member of the upper class, has had no experience of domestic work. The master then demands a ransom from the family of the former general who has fallen into his hands as a slave. Captivity and saleability was not the fate of racially-defined categories of persons. In pre-modern Ethiopia, anyone—Christian or Muslim—could be the enslaver of the other. There was no exclusion on the basis of race. This defies racially-based othering as one of the elements of the universal definition of slavery.¹⁵³

Successive dramatic events begin to unfold when the family decides to rescue the former general from captivity and slavery. The pagans demand costly gold in exchange. The general's wife and children have to dismiss their household workers in order to afford the ransom. Tobya's twin brother Wahəd becomes a *lole* (day labourer) in neighbouring households while Tobya takes on the household duties. The mother weaves yarn. This is the start of the family's altered social status. In this political life, nothing (including the individual's social status) is fixed.

Wahəd's adventures in looking for a job lead to an encounter with a merchant looking for *lole*, a labourer to pack and load goods. The merchant has other domestic workers such as *ərāñña*, a shepherd or guard, and *gordoman*, another labourer who carried, packed, unloaded and loaded goods. In those days, captives and slaves might serve as *ərāñña*, *gordoman* or *lole*. Their relationship to the *geta* was not clearly demarcated as all subjects addressed the merchant as *geta*, our lord, and his position was defined against all his servile subjects. The head of a household could host many servile subjects, slaves and

.....
153 Kopytoff and Miers 'African slavery', p.12

labourers, in a combination of hosting and ownership, as there is no concept of slave owner in Amharic other than *asadari*—a host.

Because of Wahəd's way of speaking and his general manner, the merchant questions his decision to be a labourer. Wahəd explains it as his determination to change the fate of his father: "*Lä-geta ladər mätahu*, I came to submit myself to a lord, I decide to be a *lole*, my dear lord." The merchant sends Wahəd back to his home with a gift of gold. It is a great surprise for the family to see their father arrive home one evening, after the benevolent merchant had paid the ransom to get Wahəd out of slavery.¹⁵⁴ Afäwärq does not use the notion of freedom, but extensively uses the terms "slavery" and "out of slavery". Freedom is not presented as the opposite of slavery.

The story seems to end here, but it is animated again when Wahəd decides to look for the merchant along the long-distance trade route, and to thank him. This journey takes the story to Wahəd's meetings with warring political communities along his way. He encounters numerous stories of the kidnapping of children and young people, for slavery was the norm among these political communities,¹⁵⁵ and kidnapping children from villages was one way of acquiring slaves—in this region as elsewhere in Africa.¹⁵⁶ The *ğäbärti* who were known in Ethiopian history as the key actors in long-distance trade, appear here as Muslim traders and enslavers. Kidnapping, as a social practice and lucrative business for Christians and Muslims alike, was also observed by travellers such as James Bruce who recorded how a priest first sold two of his friend's children, their mother, then his friend, and at the end the slave traders took and sold the priest himself.¹⁵⁷

In the walled compound where slaves were chained in readiness for the next market, Wahəd observes an elite slave serving the merchant as a guard. Afäwärq describes the "*šanqəlla*" as dark-skinned, tall and with the exaggerated phenotypic features used to identify people from communities which were the historical slave

154 Afäwärq, *Tobyä*, p.7

155 Op. cit., p.21.

156 Koyptoff and Miers, "African slavery".

157 Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*.

sources of southern and western Ethiopia—a stereotype that serves as an additional othering instrument. In this story, Wahəd and his father and the figure called *šanqəlla* were all slaves, irrespective of their skin colour. They were from a foreign community and their difference from the host community was based not on phenotypic character but on religion.

In this compound, Wahəd meets a number of slaves who are Christians, kidnapped from the highland. He is lucky enough to attract the attention of the slave merchant, who permits him to live in his house, as a child of the house—“*əndä yäbet ləj*”, like his children—while others are being sold. One of the slaves, who are considered *yäbet ləj*, is the son of the peasants who had hosted Wahəd. The notion *yäbet ləj* is used here to describe both the children of the master and other captives and slaves: *Yäbet* means belonging to the house, the master being *yä betu geta*, the lord of the house. Adding a family member with the status of *yäbet-ləj*, was an asset to a family, as it was to a kinship and a community. All members of the family, the slaves and other workers lived under the rule of the head of the household, whose relationship to his slaves is described not as that of master-slave or owner-owned but as *yä geta ləj*, owner and host of the house.

In Amharic, a slave master is called *yä-barya asadari*, someone who “hosts” rather than “owns” a slave. Slavery and other servile relations are a “continuum to kinship at household level”.¹⁵⁸ *Barya* became *yäbet ləj* and joined the family of the master. In the Amharic Christian community, the power relationship between the master and the slave is perhaps best described by the master’s authority to rename the slave, erasing the name of his birth. Slave names are formed by a phrase such as “I lost my father”: when the slave hears this name, she will utter a specific response such as “let God give mercy to his soul”. This depicts the everyday life of dependency between the *geta* and *barya*: the response of the slave is the normal speech of condolence and blessing to the master and the deceased father.¹⁵⁹

Wahəd later becomes one of the *yäbet ləj[s]* in a non-Christian

158 Kopytoff and Miers, “African slavery”.

159 See collection of slave names in Säyfu, “*Yäbarya səm bä’ amaraw baḥəl*”.

Hägär. He abandons his dream of meeting the benevolent merchant in the adventure that had led to his enslavement. A young boy, whom the merchant could not dare allow to become a *lole*, becomes a slave. It is now time for his father and his sister Ȧbya to act against Wahäd's unfortunate destiny. They set out on a journey to look for him. Ȧbya disguises herself as a man. Despite the predicament of their historical and political setting, the family doesn't give up the struggle to overcome it. Afäwärq was heavily influenced by hagiographic writing in which female saints were disguised as men, but were revealed posthumously as women.

After a tiring journey, Ȧbya and her father find themselves in a town and feeling unsafe, as their host gives them news of an impending invasion by a large pagan army. At the next dawn the infidel army attacks the town, with looting, killing and enslavement—which the chronicles of Christian kings and *Futūḥ al Ḥabaša* (a chronicle of the Imam Ahmed ibn Al Gazi) have both documented. Ȧbya and her father become captives of the pagan king who accepts them with mercy, generosity and consideration. This king is first presented as a Muslim and later as an infidel, a believer in a sphinx called *Sobdiat*. After looting, plundering and killing, the army settles down and the troops submit their booty to the king in a ceremony.

Afäwärq describes it in his own words: "... the king sat on the golden chair surrounded by his nobles on his left and on the right stood a gigantic *šanqella* displaying a sword tall enough to easily cut the neck of an elephant. On the king's left and right stood five thousand muscled guards, each of whom could easily kill an elephant."¹⁶⁰ The king's appearance is contrasted with the appearance of the *šanqella* "except that his fair skin colour was like that of an angel as he was surrounded by darker-skinned *šanqella* displaying their swords."

Such descriptions signify the nature and organization of armies in the region. The common element was captives and slaves. The *šanqella* participated as both guards and members of a large army—even the personal guards came out of the *šanqella*. The army

160 Afäwärq, *Ȧbya*, p.53.

was one of the public and political spaces of slaves in the states of both Christians and non-Christians in pre-modern Ethiopia. It is easy to see how states made wars and how these wars produced and consumed slaves. This imagining can also apply to the Christian army—the nature of the *čäwa* army is not significantly different from what Afäwärq describes as the *šanqəlla* army in the non-Christian community. The strong presence of slaves in the army and in the political arena, and the conceptual hint of the presence of captives in the army indicate the role slaves played in the making of pre-modern states in the region.

Ṭobyä, now disguised as the son of her father, attracts attention as Wahəd had received from the slave merchant. The king encourages Ṭobyä to be his loyal and close adviser. She is appreciated and respected in the political space of the conquerors. She also inspires the king. When he sees her crying during the booty ceremony he declares religious equality and orders his army to desist from looting and plundering, especially from the peasants. A new era of peace begins and a new city is founded. The conquered inspire the conqueror to establish new political relationships (in this instance the conqueror is a non-Christian whereas in Ethiopian mainstream history the formation of the state is narrated from the paradigm of Christian conquerors). In the novel, the king pleads with Ṭobyä and her father to be his advisers. This is the second public and political space, where captives and slaves become administrators, diplomats, strategic advisers and army leaders; they are visible and influential.

The king's cousin falls in love with Ṭobyä, not knowing she is a woman disguised as a man. It does not take long, however, for Ṭobyä and her father to reveal their secret to the king, after other men in the palace have accused Ṭobyä of an illegitimate relationship with the king's cousin. Delighted by the news of Ṭobyä's true identity and the purpose of their travels, the king helps the family to bring back Wahəd and save him from slavery. He announces by decree that everyone should bring their slaves to the palace—he would pay ten times the price of the slave if he found the person he was looking for. It takes three days to find Wahəd.

Wahəd joins the family, now part of the community, but he

has not forgotten the benevolent merchant who lost his wealth when his property was looted during the war. Now it is Wahəd's turn to help the merchant, with the king's assistance. Finally, the family becomes part of the nobility, and meets the merchant. The three captives and the slave merchant become officials serving in the palace, demystifying the narrative of slaves as mere objects in the household. The king falls in love with Ȧobyā, proposes to her and requests Wahəd to marry the king's cousin. Although the king had done them these favours, Ȧobyā rejects the proposal on account of religious difference. The king, deeply in love with Ȧobyā, is later baptized, converts to Christianity and marries Ȧobyā who becomes a queen surrounded by *dāngäṭur*—maids and one thousand *šanqəlla*, in addition to the guards. Wahəd becomes a high official, counsellor and close confidante of the king. The king and Ȧobyā, Wahəd and the king's cousin are married on the same day. The name Wahəd means unity of the Christian and the infidel, the Amhara and the non-believer. This imagining of unity transcending religious identity was the ethos of the modern state of Ethiopia and this was a retrospective reading of its formation. Wahəd, a young boy from a noble family had willingly been a labourer (*lölē* and *gordoman*) and then become a slave, and then a counsellor and high official of the king.

The novel demonstrates the unending process of state formation in the Ethiopian region involving kingdoms, sultanates and other polities and ending with the modern Ethiopian state which has depoliticized religion, at least in the prescriptive writings of scholars such as Afāwärq. The lives of each household and those of individuals were determined by the dynamics of endless wars. It was this structural history that Afāwärq fictionalized to tell an ethnographic story. The narrative depicts courts and palaces as political spaces where individuals of humble origin are significantly involved. Elite slaves were prominent political actors on the battlefield and in the court; in the political realm of the pre-modern world slaves may have been mere objects but they held sword and pen.

Ȧobyā, born from a general, has been a captive, a slave and, finally, a queen. She inspires a new political imagination in which religious wars have come to an end and religious equality has been

declared. The story serves to illustrate the history of the underclass and slaves and their place in the making of states in pre-modern Ethiopia. Afäwärq, like many other early twentieth-century scholars such as Gäbrä-Həywät Baykädañ, imagined, in his book, a way of resolving national crisis in the time of trial and tribulation. He depicted the end of religion as the ideology of state formation and the beginning of a new ethos as a mobilizing force uniting the communities who took part in the competing state formation process. This new ethos of civilization, progress and development is anticipated to play a role in forging the national harmony of the emerging modern state out of the empire and its competing political communities. The idea of progress, however, is not alien to the pre-modern world. Slavery as an institution is reproduced through the notion of progress.

Enslaving the Uncivilized and Civilizing the Enslaved: Civilization in Slavery

In the last days of his life, sleeping in a hospital room, a liberated slave, Gäbrä Mäsqäl, was surrounded by priests from the Ethiopian Orthodox and Catholic churches, a pastor and an imam, all competing to receive his will and confession according to their respective religious orders. All claimed Gäbrä Mäsqäl as their fellow believer and fought for the privilege of handling the confession and the forthcoming burial ceremony, as well as demanding the associated service payment. Gäbrä Mäsqäl was confused, and chanted a song:

I was born free and grew up with care,
But I was enslaved and sold like a sheep for gold
Unbelievers, the Christians and Muslims bought
me at a high price,
The farmer made me farm, and the urbanites
made me work,
The local governor made me labour as a pretext
of tribute,
Border guards robbed me and tax collectors
overloaded me
I have been a *barya* in my entire life!

I was liberated but never free!
 Contemplating the notion of liberty, freedom,
 slavery and bondage,
 I have lived my life with little understanding of
 all these concepts.
 On the eve of my death, they asked me to buy the
 same slavery,
 As I have lived witnessing and observing,
 It was those who want to buy, that used to pay
 my price.¹⁶¹

Gäbrä Mäsqäl was not a natural slave. There was no natural slave in the Ethiopian region; slaves were spoils of war. Gäbrä Mäsqäl was his third name. His first name was Archu Kurchu¹⁶² given to him by the community of his birth, where he lived until slave raiders came to his village one unfortunate day. Slave raiding and wars between political communities produced slaves. According to the pre-modern Ethiopian legal code, the *Fəṭḥa Nəgəst*, “All men share liberty on the basis of the natural law ... war and strength of horses bring some to the service of others because law of war and victory makes the vanquished the slaves of the victors.”¹⁶³ The victors always enslaved the vanquished as a right emanating from strength. Religion, as the ideology of organized political communities, served to legitimize both war and enslavement. Christian Ethiopians believed that only non-Christian vanquished unbelievers were potential slaves and, similarly, that Muslims enslaved non-believers. Many other communities of the Ethiopian region protected their own society, on the ideological level at least, and subjected others to servility. This was a general trend in Africa where “societies were receptive to all

161 Alāmayāhu Mogäs, *Gäbrä Mäsqäl Baryaw: Tarikawi Lebwäläd* (Historical Novel) (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Sälām printing press, 1955 Ethiopian Calender). Translation by the author.

162 This is a non-Amharic name, perhaps the personal name of a historical victim of slavery, or possibly a birth name among communities hitherto vulnerable to slave raids in the north and south-western parts of contemporary Ethiopia.

163 Paulos, *The Fetha Negest*; Pankhurst, “Slavery and Emancipation in Traditional Ethiopia: The Role of the *Fetha Negest* or Laws of the Kings,” *African and Asian Studies* 10 (2011), pp.32–40.

opportunities for bringing outsiders into their midst as dependents and retainers”.¹⁶⁴

Archu fell victim to slave raiders and was taken away to live as a slave, with a new name, Häbtəh Yəmār, in Amharic “let your wealth be plenty”. Enslavement involved renaming, with its own logic that reflected the social status of the slave. This tradition, of renaming a slave, the beginning of the politics of honour and the acculturation process, reveals much about the nature of power relationships in Ethiopian slavery. There were distinct Amharic slave names serving and celebrating the master, linguistically and functionally. Calling the name of a slave, and the slave’s reciprocal acknowledgement of the call, mirrored a political performance in the domestic realm. It was a very distinct tradition, occurring only in slave-master relationships in the Amharic world.

The linguist Säyfu Mättäfärya wrote a fascinating article, “*Yäbarya sām bā’ amaraw baḥəl*”, pertaining to slave naming in Ethiopian communities. He collected numerous slave names and interpreted their poetic and functional meanings. The slave names Häbtəh Yəmār were for males and Häbtəš Yəmār were for females. When the master, or any other person, called these slaves, they had no right to say “yes” to acknowledge the call but had to reply, for example, *bäemäbete zāmān* or *bägetaye zāmān*, “in my princess’s time” or “in my lord’s era”.¹⁶⁵ The calling of these names and the reciprocal acknowledgment by the slaves appeared strikingly political, performative and poetic:

Slave’s name: Let your wealth be plenty

Acknowledgment: In my lord’s time

Slave’s name: A friend in the world

Acknowledgment: No one except you

Slave’s name: *Ləkura bähullu*, “Let me have a reason to be proud towards everyone”

Acknowledgment: *əmmäbete sallu* “as long as my mistress is there”.

The politics and poetics of slave naming, and the performance

¹⁶⁴ Kopytoff and Miers, “African slavery”, p.14.

¹⁶⁵ Säyfu, “*Yäbarya sām bā’ amaraw baḥəl*”.

embedded in it, depict the most sophisticated master-slave interdependence in the household realm and elsewhere. The slave name was important to an Ethiopian master, who needed it for social and religious functions and numerous other purposes. The ethnographic aspects of these names are recorded in documents which have faded with time, and hence historical novels such as *Gäbrä Mäsqäl Baryaw* are indispensable for capturing the power relationship that involved persons considered *barya* and *geta*.

When he was enslaved, Häbtəh Yəməṛ performed the everyday relational routine, although the writer does not record the poetic performance. He must have been responding “in my *geta*’s time” whenever his master called him, a response that served as an ordinary form of blessing the *geta*. In the household, in addition to his or her labour, the *geta* depended on the performativity and poetic service of the *barya*.

There were also different kinds of slave names. In the Ge’ez linguistic world, slaves were also given classic Latin or Greek names such as *Ilarya* (Hillary) *Iyopäraqsəya* (Eupraxia—good conduct) as a marker of difference, as slaves were considered to be foreign.¹⁶⁶ In the Amharic linguistic world slaves’ names had functional meanings such as *Sättāñ* (“He [God] gave me [this slave]”) which indicates that the connection between the *geta* and *barya* was a divine bond. Although slaves were produced by violent means, the master acquired them by purchase, gift or tribute and the bond was maintained and rationalized through religious and cultural discourse. The *geta* was not a master only to the slave but the head of the house in which slaves, children, wives and other dependents lived as subordinate subjects. Living in the household, the *barya* extended the power relationship to the members of the household. This can be read parallel to the conceptualization of slavery as a “continuum to kinship” in wider Africa.¹⁶⁷ The *geta-barya* relationship was one of the pillars of power in the domestic realm of pre-modern Ethiopia.

166 Wendy Laura Belcher and Michael Kleiner (translators and editors), *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros a Seventeenth-Century African Biography of an Ethiopian Woma*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.)

167 Kopytoff and Miers, “African slavery”.

Häbtəh Yəmār also entered into this mode of power relationship in a Christian community as a slave, and joined different households bonded with a *geta*. Cultural and religious discourse defined him as a slave, someone from an alien community, and a particular notion of progress justified his servitude which was a necessary condition for making him a cultured and baptized Christian subject.

Gäbrä Mäsqäl *Baryaw*: Slaves as Subjects of Civilization

As a slave, Häbtəh Yəmār lived with the promise of manumission. Every slave was a potential candidate for manumission by law in the pre-modern Ethiopian Christian world, with baptism and acculturation the pre-conditions. The *geta-barya* bond was the pastoral power relationship in which the *geta* is considered a Christian mentor to the *barya*, the two processes making the *barya* no longer an alien subject living in a host community. This process of integration justified the practice of slavery. It is a constructed paradise or utopia that every slave could anticipate achieving. After serving different *getas* in the Christian community, Häbtəh Yəmār was granted his manumission, after which he was given a third name, a Christian name, Gäbrä Mäsqäl, meaning, in Ge'ez, the slave of the cross.

Gäbrä Mäsqäl established a family to live as a *zega* or free commoner. Now he could answer “yes” to the name of Gäbrä Mäsqäl from fellow commoners or from elites. Being a slave to a person seems a precondition to his eventual release to become a slave of God, as a Christian subject. To become a slave of God through the pastoral mentorship of his master was justification of his subjection in the household. However, after manumission, Gäbrä Mäsqäl found himself, like other subjects, in bondage and servility to numerous authorities such as local governors, tribute and tax collectors. The utopia he had imagined when he was a slave simply dissipated. Concepts such as liberty and freedom became empty words, owing to his exploitative and hierarchal experiences as a worker, a businessman and a farmer. Comparison of his status as a *barya* in the past led him to question his new status as *zega*.

Finally, on the point of death, he reflected on his subjection to

the conditions of slavery, servitude, bondage and the ambiguous link with others such as masters, priests and tribute collectors—including God. To become a true slave of God necessitated his enslavement, as preached by his enslavers; after manumission and change of his name religious leaders were again competing to make him a believer in their religions. They urged him to be a slave of God, which he thought he had already achieved when he was granted manumission. To be a slave of God had become the ultimate but unachievable destiny or utopia. The song captures the story of his life experiences and his retrospective existential thoughts about his subjugation and about utopia. As seen in this briefly-quoted experience of Gäbrä Mäsqäl in late nineteenth-century Ethiopia, one of the candidates to pass through what is called *śāltāna*, or a civilizing process, was a slave. Therefore, *barya* is the Ethiopian civilizational “other” recruited from the vanquished communities through the unending state-making wars. As the politics of naming a slave entails *barya*, the former slave was the object of *śāltāna*. The production of *barya* was justified primarily by cultural and religious othering; enslavement was perceived as the process of humanizing the lost sheep rescued from the darkness of the world of infidels, and subjugation was a necessary pre-condition for the achievement of utopia. After a person was captured he would join the world of slavery and a process of training and mentorship under a Christian master, or *geta*. Slavery was a specific kind of cultivating process—defined by both the profane and sacred elements of *śāltāna*—which began with the renaming. In the process, a slave would pass through different kinds of suppression from multiple sites of power.

Religion was the central othering ideology in the institution of trans-African slavery, as *Fəṭḥa Nəgäst* states: “Of those infidels and migrants, who live with you, let them be your male and female slaves.”¹⁶⁸ It also encouraged the buying of Christian slaves from non-Christians. The *geta* could only sell his slave to a Christian, to ensure the continuity of the civilizing process. Christians and Muslims both discouraged enslaving their religious fellows, at least in

168 Paulos, *Fethä Negest*, pp.261–262.

theory. There are similarities between Christian and Islamic worlds or episteme when it comes to the institution and practice of slavery in the construction of othering. The Oromos, prominent participants in the state formation process in the Ethiopian region, had a similar process of acculturation called *mogassa* and *guddifača*.¹⁶⁹

In the Christian Amharic world, a slave would pass through a training process to become a civilized, baptized or cultured subject called *asälät*, literally a fourth-generation slave (child of a third-generation slave called *qənağ*) but the concept connotes more about training or acculturation than genealogical succession. *Asälät*, a former slave, is therefore called in Ge'ez *śəluṭ* or *śəṭṭun*, an Amharic equivalent for an able, civilized and cultured subject. Gäbrä Mäsqäl became *asälät* or *śəṭṭun* when he was baptized and trained. He received three names in this acculturation and baptism process, signifying three subjective worlds: a free being in his natal community and locality, a slave in an alien community and finally a liberated subject as *śəṭṭun* or *asälät*. Etymologically the term *śəṭṭun* or *śəluṭ* came from Ge'ez root words such as *sälätä* or *sälätänä*. *Sälätä* is a synonym of Latin terms such as *potestatem*, *facultas*, *authoritate* and *dominatus* (power, capacity, authority and mastery). Similar to the Arabic word *sultan*, the Amharic *śəṭṭan* entails power or to have authority over something—for example, a king's authority over the people or the authority of the nobility.

Such authority could also be over one's inner natural inclinations or over the outside world or environment. *Śəṭṭun* may signify both profane and divine power or authority, whereas *śəgawī śəṭṭan* means earthly or profane power such as the power of the emperor or the king. *Mämfäsawī śəṭṭan* is spiritual or divine power, best exemplified by the bishop's authority. The term *sälätä* was also defined as a process to “rectify or renovate the incongruous and fill or complete the unfilled or the incomplete”.¹⁷⁰ It connotes both quantitative and qualitative change and improvement. In Ge'ez,

169 Ayalew Duressa, “Guddifmhaa: Adoption Practice in Oromo Society with Particular Reference to the Borana Oromo.” Unpublished Master's thesis in Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, 2002.

170 Dästa, *Addis Yä Amaräñña Mäzägäbä Qalat*, p.885.

tsälät bā sāgakä and *zäysälṭ bāmānfäskä* implies an improvement in both the profane and the sacred, involving the binary etymological roots referring to the power and improvement of flesh and spirit, the earthly and the ecclesiastical.

The incompleteness in the *barya* was measured in this bifurcated conversation of profane and sacred and therefore needed the intervention of the master to fill the gap. The transformation of the slave was measured in terms of baptism and to the extent of joining the world of monastic life to achieve spiritual power, *mānfāsawī sālṭan*—one of the seven ways of manumission was baptism and becoming a monk or nun).¹⁷¹ The name Gäbrä Ēgziabəḥer signifies Häbtəh Yəməār's eventual submission to God and his achievement of *Mānfāsawī sālṭan*—a Christian paradise, liberation from slavery to the devil—while still in the community of his birth. Manumission also considered virtuous acts that cleanse the *geta* of worldly sin, another form of slavery. For example, A story in one of the hagiographies provides an example: the parents of Abunä Täklä Haymanot manumitted all their male and female slaves as the beginning of their virtuous acts and submission to God.¹⁷²

The term '*barya*' itself enters into Ge'ez literature as the name of the devil, the extreme opposite of the divine being. Sacred books or *katab* were produced to fight this spirit and conjure it up from the possessed person.¹⁷³ Therefore, a slave is represented under two forms of domination: under *geta* and under the devil. The blessing "let you be liberated from the slavery of your *geta* (master) and let you perfectly be free from the slavery of the devil"¹⁷⁴ entails this dual subjugation; under a Christian *geta* it was a means of liberation through baptism, a symbolic process signifying submission to God or becoming Gäbrä Mäsqäl, slave of the cross in Ge'ez, the ultimate paradise on earth. In

171 Paulos, *The Fetha Nagast*, p.263.

172 *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot bā Ge'ez ena Amarāñña* (Hagiography of Täklä Haymanot in Ge'ez and Amharic) (Addis Ababa: Tesfa Printing House), p.19.

173 *Kitab* is one of these sacred texts produced to fight against unholy spirits, *barya* being one of them, or devils. See *bäente barya wā legion wā shotālay*, Institute of Ethiopian Studies Manuscript 4445 or *bäente aynä tila wā barya wā legion wā bäente shotālay* IES MS. 4446.

174 *Yä Nägästāt Tarik Bäkäfil kă Ats'é Susnios eskä Ats'é Mənilək* Unpublished, no date, no author. IES manuscript number 1573.

the hierarchal proximity to the state, a pious *barya* sometimes achieved submission to God before the wicked *geta*. There is an interesting story in the hagiography *Gädlä Zena Marqos*, about a slave and miracle. A greedy master sends his slave to deliver food to the king, who had requested it for a visiting patriarch. The greedy master orders the slave to take badly-cooked food in order to avoid another similar request. When the king sees it, the master accuses the slave, who prays for a miracle from the saint, *Abunä Zena Marqos*, and is saved from harsh punishment. The food miraculously cures many in the palace of illnesses but the master receives a violent punishment.

Acculturation, or achieving *śāgawi sālṭan*, was another way of changing the status of the slave. Joining the army of the emperor was one of the smoothest processes of manumission. Being a slave of the emperor was a form of utopia but it was conditioned by the rendering of military service.

The discourse of the sacred and profane *sālṭāna* was therefore used to define, prepare and exclude individuals or groups as *barya* or slave, as the civilizational other in the Ethiopian political configuration. The discourse of *sālṭāna* justified the institution of slavery, which the pre-modern state in Africa and elsewhere consumed in order to reproduce itself. The *geta* or master is *asūlṭañ*, a civilizer and cultural mentor to the *barya* who has become so because of earthly (or profane) and sacred (or spiritual) otherness. As opposed to the Aristotelian natural slave, the Ethiopian slave is a civil slave, a product of war between Christians and non-Christians. The *geta* or the master is both profane and divine innovator, rectifier or trainer, analogous to the English word “civilizer”. Indeed, *Gäbrä Mäsqäl*, was the product of a slave raid and served in numerous households before he could get his manumission.

The process of *sālṭāna* in this sense had an emancipatory effect on the *barya* or slave. It was a good Christian virtue to liberate a slave, and masters were also encouraged to liberate slaves, as *The Law of Kings* states: “Manumission belongs to kindness and it is righteous to liberate someone. It is the best gift all gifts. It is to authorize a man to rule himself by natural law and instinct.” Therefore, *sālṭāna* was central to the justification of *barənāt* or slavery, which was defined by

civilizational, cultural or religious otherness in the Ge'ez or Amharic discursive world. Cultural (or civilizational) and salvational (or religious) baptism were involved in the process of *śālṭāna* through which the other, or the slave, became part of the community when he or she graduated in the sacred and profane sense.

Baptism and acculturation were lengthy processes. Those who joined the emperor's army became slaves to none except him, entering into a direct reciprocal relationship with the emperor, as the history of *čäwa* depicts. They were completely dependent on the emperor. The military service they rendered enabled the emperor to rule over the *zega* or to wage war against rebellious elites or communities in the struggle for territorial expansion and control of the trade routes. Joining the army of the emperor was the most efficient means of ascending to the highest political status, above all other political groups in the Ethiopian matrix of political power.

The Ethiopian model of the political had hitherto had been made up of a Hegelian triad: *Nəgusä Nəgäst* (the emperor), the *barya* (the elite slave) and the *zega* (the commoner). As clergy prayed for the emperor, the elite slaves fought the emperor's war and ruled over the commoners who produced and paid tribute to the state. The institutions of religion and of slavery were juxtaposed as ideological pillars of the Ethiopian political realm. In the household realm, the head or the *geta* of the house was considered a mentor and civilizer to a domestic slave. Analagous to the head of the household, the emperor had a divine mission at state level. The positions of mentor and civilizer remained, while the discourse of religion as a collective mobilizing force gradually disappeared.

In the nineteenth century, however, otherness defined by culture and religion slowly began to negotiate with the civilizational discourse of material improvement. Being a good slave of God was not enough to erase otherness in the times when political, social and economic crises conditioned the birth of a popular quest for change. Theophilus Waldmeier, a missionary visiting Ethiopia, claimed to have received a letter from the emperor Tewodros who had liberated hundreds of slaves from dealers and wanted Waldmeier to teach the liberated slaves "arts and religion". Slaves became the first subjects

(before the *zega* became the subjects of an emerging ethos of state developmentalism) of this new civilizing mission, made ready to absorb the knowledge anticipated to be coming from Europeans. There was an urgent need for skills in craft and metalwork. Waldmeier described the emperor as a “friend to both civilization and our mission [religion]” and at Gafat, where the emperor established a workshop to produce cannons and guns, “religion, civilization, arts and trade were the subjects of private and public conversation”. What was the Amharic articulation—what Waldmeier called “civilization”—which was different from household baptism and acculturation? What is at stake here is how this discourse of civilization emerged and what categories were used to express it. How did it transform private and public political relationships? To make this transformation intelligible, we shall engage *Fəkkare Iyäsus* briefly as another root of the Ethiopian discourse of civilization, and rely on conceptual evolution and semantic expansion of the term *śəltāna* into *śəltṭane* as it is captured from the late nineteenth-century chronicles, letters, memoirs and religious texts.

Pre-Modern Prophecy in Modern Politics: The Ethos of Modern Ethiopia

OUR DISCUSSION OF prophecy and politics in the Ethiopian pre-modern world begins with a story in the oral discursive tradition of Kaffa, one of the states in the region. The story is about a king, Matto, and a captive slave, Minjo, a foreigner from the coastal region who had been blessed by his mother to become the king of Kaffa. Minjo had fallen into the hands of Matto's slave army. One day, a voice issuing mysteriously from a cockerel was heard in the palace, announcing that whoever ate its head would become king of Kaffa. On the advice of his councillors, King Matto ordered his wife to kill and cook the cockerel but, to his disappointment, the head was given to his slave Minjo, who became king. This story combined the myth of origin with prophesy mobilized for a political goal.¹⁷⁵

Traditions in the African myths of origin, prophesy, epic and folklore played a central role in the political realm. Myths of origin were a common denominator of pre-modern states in the Ethiopian region, as in wider Africa. Even when Africans encountered a religion such as Islam or Christianity there was a process of self-rewriting, merging the existing tradition with the new one, as the West African experience best illustrates. The myth of origins also passed through this self-rewriting—a negotiated process between the old and the new.¹⁷⁶

175 Huntingford, "The Wealth of Kings", pp.1–23.

176 Diagne S. Bachir, "Toward an Intellectual History of West Africa: The meanings of Timbuktu", in *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, edited by Shamil Jeppie and Souleymane Bachir Diagne (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), pp.19–30.

The myths of origin were an instrument of preservation. As they often attached political power to a dynasty, they were a formidable tool for maintaining and stabilizing authority in polities. By invoking tradition, myth also invokes the past to justify political rule in the present. Myths tend to ensure political certainty and continuity; they are a crucial ideological tool in any discursive tradition. In appointing his predecessor King Matto as a councillor, Minjo used the myth of origin as a legitimizing tool for his power.

Prophecy is another element in most discursive traditions. Unlike the myths of origin, prophecies are an instrument of political change. They do not fix power to a family or a dynasty but are pregnant with new political possibilities and revolutionary ideas. Prophecies are filled with uncertainties and could invite the creative political subject to join the realm of politics which had been restricted by myths of origin. They are tools of difference, renewal and redemption, particularly when a tradition maintained by the myth of origin grows old and reaches the point of dysfunctionality. The installation of Minjo as a new ruler would have renewed the power politics of the Kaffa kingdom, which later controlled most of Enarya.

The myth of origin was an instrument of rule and maintenance of status, whereas prophecy was part of creative power. The content is significant in the politics of power transition in the Ethiopian Christian kingdom: prophetic content fuelled political contestation for power in pre-modern times—a strategy for ambitious individuals of all classes.

Prophecy was also mobilized in the Christian kingdom when the prophetic voice was heard in the palace, saying “he who eats my head shall be king”. This prophecy determined a dramatic power transition in the Christian kingdom, from the Zagwe to the Solomonic dynasty. A young man, Yekunno Amlak, a palace slave, became the first king of the Solomonic dynasty in 1268 after he had eaten the head of the prophetic cockerel. Two powerful fathers—the abbot Iyäsus Mo’a and Abunä Täklä Haymanot, the fathers of the Ethiopian Orthodox church—were involved in this transition of power. The story of the cockerel appears in the book *Bäcälä nägäšt* (The Wealth of Kings) and

in the *Gädlä* or hagiography of Iyäsus Mo'a,¹⁷⁷ to renew the political power of the kingdom, which became the most powerful tributary state of the region.

The movement of sovereigns, in or out of a kingdom, is the key element of the myths of origin in Ethiopia, as in many polities in wider Africa. Political formation in Eastern Africa is associated with the coming of the first king from the wilderness, as protector of collective well-being. Kintu, as the conquering king of the Ganda state or as first Kabaka¹⁷⁸ to the Buganda state, is compared in *Kəbrä Nəgäšt* to the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba, King Solomon of Israel and their son Mənilək I as the conquering king of Ethiopia. While Kintu came to Buganda, and Minjo came to Kaffa, the Queen of Sheba travelled out of Ethiopia in search of wisdom, as *Kəbrä Nəgäšt* narrates. These mythical origins served as a dynastic ideology in the pre-modern era and became an imagined history which the modern political formation accepted retrospectively. The Solomonic dynasty, using this prophecy as a political tool, emerged in the thirteenth century after displacing its predecessor, in the same way that the mythical story of Kintu was used to displace the previous centre of power led by a king called Bemba.¹⁷⁹

Religion is at the heart of most discursive traditions featuring myth and prophecy. The narrative of Kintu connects the political with the spiritual realm, as did the Ethiopian emperors' claim of ancestral connections with King Solomon and his first son Mənilək I. The spiritual connection—Christianization and baptism in the Ethiopian Christian kingdom, Islam in Sudanic states and public healing and spiritual entities for collective well-being in many states from Ethiopia to the Great Lakes region—played a part in the process of state formation. The blessing of his mother connects Minjo's power with the spiritual intervention.

Although scholars differ in locating the centre of pre-modern

177 Huntingford, "The Wealth of Kings."

178 Christopher Wrigley, *Kingship and State: The Buganda Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Holly Elisabeth Hanson, *Social History of Africa: Landed Obligation* (Oxford: Heinemann, 2003), p.42.

179 Hanson, *Social History of Africa*, p.43

political power in Africa, most schools of thought — especially those that see kingship as the locus of power and the historians of the heterarchy school who see different centres of power in Buganda and other states of the Great Lakes region — agree that the sacred element had a role in pre-modern states. They connect policy, whether written or oral, with spirituality, forming a *hierro* narrative, or what Valentine Mudimbe has termed Gnosis, defined as a kind of secret knowledge.¹⁸⁰ The discursive tradition was not limited to the pre-modern, however.

Fəkkare Iyäsus: The Politics of Prophesy in Pre-Modern Ethiopia

The Ethiopian modern is the future of the pre-modern. The future was not simply a chronological succession but part of the time-frame of pre-modern writings. In the Christian discursive tradition, prophecies were often embedded in hagiographies or chronicles, and in what is known as apocalyptic literature such as the *Apocalypse of Bharuch* (*Ra'yä Barok*), *Apocalypse of Ezra* and *Fəkkare Iyäsus*. Prophetic and apocalyptic writings were key political texts in the pre-modern Christian Ethiopian kingdom. Not only can politics express itself in poetic form — it is also subject to a prophetic genre.

One of the common prophecies in this form of literature is the coming of the righteous monarch in the Ethiopian future, as in the *Ra'yä Barok* and *Fəkkare Iyäsus*. The near and the remote future were both part of the subject of the literature. The Judaic legacy must have influenced this form of literature in the Christian world, especially in writing in the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition. Although the Christian time was known to be linear, it was not always empty time but was filled by prophecy and the imagining of a prospective future. This, in the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Bharuch*, foretells the coming of the righteous monarch and the renewal of the world:

Plants of the desert will rejoice; mountains and hills
will be happy; all human creations and beasts will be
happy. Everyone will return to his/its former being. A

180 Valentine Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988), p.199.

righteous man will reign, whose mouth will tell the truth, (E, fol. 18v) and whose waist will be clothed with fairness. Righteousness will come forth during his time.

He will rule 40 years. The year in cycle will be 53.¹⁸¹

Although these visions appear generically similar in the world of Christianity, they were contextualized within local history and politics, which allowed them to be translated, reproduced and used for a certain political goal. The politics of modern Ethiopia is itself a product of the political prophecies of subjects in pre-modern writing. As the modern writings retrospectively imagined the pre-modern, the pre-modern imagined the modern prospectively.

The idea of progress in the modern Ethiopian state is one among others produced through the prospective imagination of pre-modern political prophecies as exemplified by *Fakkare Iyäsus*:

... a king will arise from the East. His name is Tewodros [the son of God]. His eyes look like a morning star, his neck is as tall as bamboo. He will protect and host the believers who survived from the trial times. All will submit to him willingly. There will be a metropolitan who will bless the earth. The *ruined churches would be rebuilt* and renewed tirelessly. Tribulation will come to an end. Peace will be all over the earth. A rain of love and blessing will rain for eight consecutive days without any cloud. During that time conflict, dispute, rebellion, deceiving will cease to exist. All will abide by the order of the king and the word of the bishop. God's name will be respected. Prosperity and plenty will fill the earth. The country [city] will be renewed. There will be no conflict and no war, love and peace will be abundant. All will submit to God with happiness and diligence up to 40 years.¹⁸²

181 Getatchew Haile "The Ethiopian Vision of Baruk," in *Ethiopian Studies In Honour of Amha Asfaw* (New York: No publisher 2017).

182 I used the *Fakkare Iyäsus* of the 18th century Ge'ez parchment copy, the most plausible version compared to other accessible versions. *Anticipation of Jesus Includes Prayers of The Times and Teaching of Secret Parchment 18th C.*, 16–17 See IESMS, p.724 The Amharic copy was published in different

The passage is taken from an eighteenth-century Ge'ez parchment copy of *Fəkkare Iyäsus* a popular literary representation of the millenarian utopia to come after the long era of trials and misfortunes described in *Fəkkare Iyäsus*, an example of apocalyptic literature that prophesied the end of the world in the eighth millennium;¹⁸³ the speech and prophesy of Jesus but in the local socio-political context, the biblical story used to describe the social, political and economic crisis in Ethiopia as a result of the corruption of church and state. It is also known as an Ethiopian apocalyptic work and millenarian literary text. Such representation had been prevalent since the fourteenth century and in successive eras of upheaval in Ethiopia, in particular the eighteenth century. *Fəkkare Iyäsus* describes this time as one of extreme political, social and natural crisis, a catastrophe that will end with the coming of righteous kings. This popular text presents an optimistic political imagination, predicting the coming of the political messiah to ensure happiness, justice and joy in Ethiopia immediately before the Day of Judgment, the apocalyptic destiny of the world. Merid Wolde Aregay considered such construction of utopia—and the messianic emperor as its agent—to be a good example of millenarianism. In the article “Literary Origins of Ethiopian Millenarianism”, he argued that this movement was not only religious but also had a literary origin.¹⁸⁴ He connected millenarianism to the social and political condition of Ethiopia via a literary form, considering *Fəkkare Iyäsus* a textual meeting space between the biblical story and legends originating from the social and political condition of post-twelfth-century Ethiopia, and contending that the legend had developed in the context of a local power contest between the Zagwe and Solomonic dynasties in relation to the life of Emperor Theodore I (1409–1412).

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editions. There are numerous Amharic and Ge'ez copies *Fəkkare Iyäsus* See EMML Pr. No. 4429 ; EMML Pr. No. 4720 ; EMML Pr. No. 4895 ; EMML Pr. No. 435.

183 Merid Wolde Aregay, “Millenarianism and Peasant Movements,” in the Proceeding of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, 1984, p.261.

184 Merid Wolde Aregay, “Literary Origins of Ethiopian Millenarianism. Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies, 1988.

Similarly, James Bruce discussed the legends and linked them to the reign of Tewodros I, reasoning that “there must have been something very brilliant that happened” during Tewodros’s time.¹⁸⁵ Using this account, Ernest Wallis Budge connected the legend of *Fäkkare Iyäsus* with the “kindness and generosity” of Tewodros I, a “lover of sacred literature” and a “good friend to the poor”.¹⁸⁶ The emperor’s central policy was associated with his abrogation of the land treaty that granted one-third of Ethiopian land to the church.¹⁸⁷ Land redistribution was also a policy stipulated in *Fäkkare Iyäsus*. However, for Taddesse Tamrat the association of the name of the professed character of Tewodros with Emperor Tewodros I of the fifteenth century is unfounded—the two had no connection other than their name.

Underlining the social and political context in the making of the popular legend, which is a considerable section of this text, Aregay’s argument in respect of the literary origin of the prophecy appears plausible. It would be difficult (or less necessary) to relate the origin directly to the life of Emperor Tewodros I. Aregay explores the correlation between millenarianism and literary works such as *Fäkkare Iyäsus*, relating “a discovery [literary work] and an event [millenarianism], or a concept and a social structure”, to use a Foucauldian interpretation. In so doing, Aregay correlates millenarianism with the non-discursive social problems that conditioned it, via a literary work.

In this chapter, I analyze *Fäkkare Iyäsus* as a popular literary and mythical root for the idea of social change and civilization in Ethiopia. My intention is not a search for origin in order to write of the literary source of the discourse of development. Instead, it is to show how the political and historical practices of the pre-modern (perhaps represented in *Fäkkare Iyäsus* or in the discursive and conceptual aspects of Ethiopian slavery) took part in the “conditions of emergence, insertion, and functioning” of the concept

185 Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, pp. 64–65.

186 Wallis Budge, *A History of Ethiopia Nubia & Abyssinia*, p. p.301.

187 This is the most historical and influential treaty between church and state. See Wallis Budge, *A History of Ethiopia, Nubia & Abyssinia*, p.285.

of development that became the ethos of the modern Ethiopian state. What place was allocated, in progress, to the emperor in relation to the *zega* and the slaves? I attempt to map the specificity in the Ethiopian development discourse in relation to numerous local and global institutions, politico-historical events and economic processes in the late nineteenth century. Development as it emerged in a Christian kingdom in the Ethiopian region was one type of discourse and had its own particular historicity and relationship to other historicities in the region. It is capturing this historicity of civilizational discourse, and its utopia, that has warranted my examination of *Fəkkare Iyäsus*.

As the most pervasive and popular text in Ethiopia from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century, *Fəkkare Iyäsus* had been invoked numerous times for political mobilization. The text described a peaceful king rather than the image of Ethiopian emperor as warrior king represented in the chronicles and in *Kəbrä Nəgəst*. *Fəkkare Iyäsus* was a popular text reproduced across time, parallel with the processual state formation that kept *zega* under constant plight. It exemplified the popular political imagination which anticipates the coming of a peaceful monarch leading the survivors into an imagined paradise of plenty, love and fraternity.

In history, many individuals arose and embraced the name Tewodros, claiming to be the one sent to fulfill the prophesy of the righteous monarch who would terminate the endless wars. False messiahs, using the popular text as a political guide, tried to stir the masses in order to assume political power. In many instances the transition of power was contested. The most successful in emulating the literary character Tewodros was Kassa Hayəlu, who crowned himself Emperor Tewodros II (1855–1868) following the blueprint of *Fəkkare Iyäsus*.¹⁸⁸ The history of the modern Ethiopian state begins with this fulfillment of the pre-modern prophesy which was turned into a political programme by the ambitious Kassa Hayəlu. He successfully utilized *Fəkkare Iyäsus* to organize his state-making project with its imagined political goals of peace, prosperity and order.

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188 Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*.

Ethos of the Modern State: Between Authors and Discourses

The history of modern Ethiopian state formation leans heavily on the exceptional role of emperors. For example, Emperor Tewodros II is arguably thought to be the father of the modern Ethiopian state,¹⁸⁹ credited as the first Ethiopian monarch to imagine a “united, strong and progressive Ethiopian state, the peer of any other state in the world”.¹⁹⁰ For Steven Rubenson, Tewodros II is the first modernizing emperor, a “unifier, restorer and modernizer”. Many historians consider the period of his rule as “the new era in Ethiopian history”. They did not, however, consider *Fakkare Iyäsus*, which had been the blueprint for Tewodros’s political imagination, as more than a millenarian text that justified Tewodros’s ambition.

The emperor’s history is written through the pen of chroniclers of modernization in the 1950s and 1960s, considering him a socially disenchanted being and a man ahead of his time.¹⁹¹ Analyzing him in a limited way as an individual, most historians have treated Emperor Tewodros II as a creative subject but they have disregarded the social, political and historical context that produced him. Bahru Zewde’s representation of the transformatory change from Kassa to the Emperor Tewodros II is an example: relating Tewodros to the Robin Hood character, he places more significance on Kassa’s prior life of banditry, describing it as “the most formative period” that determined his personality, simplicity and concern for social justice. For him, Tewodros’s “abiding interest in discipline [*šarat*] and artillery” was born out of his defeat against the well-disciplined and heavily armed Egyptian army at the battle of Däbarqi in 1848.

For Donald Crummey, Tewodros was “Ethiopia’s first monarch with a concept (however vague) of modernization”, a response

189 For contested history of Emperor Tewodros see Tadesse Tamrat et al. *Kassa and Kassa: Papers on the Lives, Times and Images of Tēwodros II and Yohānnas IV (1855–1889)* (Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, 1990).

190 Sven Rubenson, *King of Kings, Tewodros of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Haile Sellassie I University, Department of History: Historical Studies 2, 1966).

191 Richard Pankhurst, “Tewodros as an Innovator.” In Tamrat et al. *Kassa and Kassa: Papers on the Lives, Times and Images of Tēwodros II and Yohānnas IV (1855–1889)*, (Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, 1990), pp.127–144.

to foreign pressure in the nineteenth century. One of the criteria historians use to label Tewodros as a modernizer is his grasp of the “concept of modernization”. His “policy to unify and pacify the country by means of religion”¹⁹² against internal division and foreign encroachment is the first of its kind. His programmes to “reform the country’s domestic life” discouraged polygamy, and soldiers’ looting of the *zega* or commoners. His was an attempt to abolish slavery, a vision of “national renewal” through an active foreign policy with Europe—and the alteration of geographical barriers by constructing roads and building ships.¹⁹³

Modernization in the context of nineteenth-century Africa, was, according to Crummey, defined by the reaction of Africans to Europeanization, either in Africans’ efforts to introduce Western technology or in their attempts to transform and modernize African societies. The response of Emperor Tewodros to European and Egyptian pressure is considered to be a foundation stone of the “modern” state of Ethiopia.¹⁹⁴ Contemporary state formation should be seen in relation to the unfolding dynamic politics of the immediate past, or else the history of the modern state will be perceived as that of Westernization or merely of reaction to Western influence. Such historiography assumes that before the nineteenth century African leaders did not attempt to introduce technology or to engage in foreign policy, or to transform their societies, but were “content to let the ancient customs of the country prevail, and ... made no attempt to control them or change them, unless it suited their personal convenience”.¹⁹⁵ Change, and the agents of change, were not objects of historical inquiry in this historiography. As Yusuf Bala Usman said, such historians are “trying to ossify history, and trying to deny revolutionary change and argue that everything has changed very slowly if at all”.¹⁹⁶

In Ethiopia, the imagination of political reform was long

192 Donald Crummey, “Tewodros as Reformer and Modernizer,” *Journal of African History*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1969), p.458.

193 Rubenson, *King of Kings*.

194 Crummey, “Tewodros as Reformer and Modernizer”, p.457

195 Wallis Budge, *A History of Ethiopia Nubia & Abyssinia*.

196 Usman, *Beyond Fairy Tales*, p.54.

awaited, perhaps since the thirteenth century, the time of the legends and of texts such as *Fäkkare Iyäsus*. Most historians refrain from reading these literary and religious documents as a subject or a “monument”, and as a result they disregard their history and their role in it. In the historiography of modern Ethiopia, historians credited the thinking subject such as Emperor Tewodros, only with his “vague understanding of modernization.” Modernization in this sense is seen as the beginning of change in Ethiopia. The aspiration of change in literary form was not seen beyond mere millenarianism.

My assumption is that the formation of the modern state and the emergence of its ethos at a particular moment should be written in consideration of the discursive tradition inherited from the pre-modern, the creative agents such as the masses and political elites—the local-global interactions that influenced this moment. It appears appropriate, both methodologically and politically, to juxtapose the discursive analysis with the speaking and creative subjects, or the authors—ranging from common people to political elites—to map the discursive formations as the ethos of the Ethiopian state. Bringing the creative subject, the agent and the body into discourse analysis would defy the Foucauldian method and is tantamount to a shift from archeology to the history of ideas. My mode of writing here relates to the local and global context at the same time that it considers *Fäkkare Iyäsus* and its mobilization as an ethnographic moment. The emergence of development as the ethos of a modern state is written from the perspective of an evolving discursive tradition that had been animating political change in the pre-modern world.

In this way, I keep my distance from a particular mode of writing best exemplified by the post-development school. This school, by being doctrinaire about discourse analysis, produced the history of development discourse as colonizing the modern history of Africa. To avoid this trap, I rely primarily on local concepts used in articulating development, which in turn warrants consideration of the creative subjects (either commoners or elites) involved in the process. In so doing, I hope to refrain from writing the history of the discourse of development as something disempowering and de-politicizing, and

representing the local, a priori, as a helpless subject.

What is at stake here is the silencing of the local context and the pre-modern text in writing the “modern” history of the state. Adopting the name of the prophetic king described in the *Fəkkare Iyäsus*, how could Emperor Tewodros II be represented both as a man ahead of his time and as a mere asocial and ahistorical creative subject? How is such a description plausible when he was yet to revive the church and renew the country, pursuing some of the prescriptions professed in the text, including land reform? Perhaps reading *Fəkkare Iyäsus* closely, and in the context of historicizing, might have allowed historians to appreciate the legacy of this literary and discursive imagination in transforming a man named Kassa into the visionary leader Emperor Tewodros II—and the pre-modern tributary state by the process of formation into a modern state with development as its ethos.

This in turn could broaden the analytical frame. Firstly, the literary representation of the quest for social change and political transformation through agency (the prophetic King Tewodros) would not be silenced. The authorship of the local community would be brought into the narrative. This means that the pre-modern literary root would be considered in making sense of the emergence of the discourse of civilization and development as the ethos of the modern Ethiopian state. Secondly, Kassa’s intellect, his readership of the text and the reality of the local and the emerging colonial condition has to be analyzed in order to map the formation of the modern state with its ethos. The history of discourse development in this period must be the written expression of political imagination in the context of local and global sensibilities, religious and secular.

Kassa and *Fekkaré Iyäsus*: The Creative Subject and the Discursive Tradition

This discourse embedded in *Fəkkare Iyäsus* can be seen, on one hand, in its description of the contemporary socio-political conditions and, on the other, the transformative imagination of the changes and the agents of change. When it comes to description, the disorders of the times of trial and tribulation and the dystopian representation

in the *Fəkkare Iyäsus* were used to express the historical times of *zämänä mäsaḥānt* or the era of princes (1769–1855), the immediate prehistory of the “modern” state of Ethiopia. The era of the princes was also popularly considered as a time of disintegration¹⁹⁷ owing to striving princes and centrifugal forces creating a kind of Hobbesian “state of nature” out of which a strong man, Kassa, was born to take up a role like that of Niccolò Machiavelli’s prince to restore and unite the Ethiopian state out of the division of *Zämänä mäsaḥānt*. A verse in the bible which states that “in those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes”¹⁹⁸ was an additional tool to articulate the historical events of *Zämänä mäsaḥānt*.

In the prophesy, the renewal, in the words of Merid Wolde Argay, of the city and the church, or the rebuilding of the church and renewing of the country, were the two tasks required to reach the imagined paradise of happiness, plenty, prosperity and equality. *Sälam* (peace), *häset* (happiness), *bäräkät* (prosperity or plenty) and *fəkər* (love) were used in constructing it. The unconditional submission of the people to the king was an important political component of the prophecy. The emperor would reciprocate by delivering justice and warranting peace, happiness and well-being for the people. This was crucial to the making of the ethos of the modern Ethiopian state. The emperor’s will and his ability to materialize this utopia, or secular heaven, supplemented the divine power.

It was this descriptive and prescriptive discourse that made Kassa forsake his name and adopt the name of Tewodros, the messiah. This is an additional depiction of the role of naming and renaming in Ethiopian politics. However, it is implausible to reduce Kassa, as a mere “speaking subject”, to the literary and discursive protagonist that is Tewodros—mainly because of local and global conditions. Emperor Tewodros II was already aware of the level of European

197 Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952); Abir, *Ethiopia and the Red Sea*; Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*; and Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia* are among the few scholars who uphold the disintegration thesis. For an alternative narrative of the period see Shiferaw Bekele, “The State in the *Zamana Mäsaḥānt* (1786–1853)”, in *Kassa and Kassa*, 1990.

198 Shiferaw Bekele, “Reflections on the Power Elite of the *Wärä séh Mäsaḥānt* 1786–1853,” *Annales of D’Ethiopie*, Volume 15, annee 1990, pp.157–179.

material achievement and the presence of European forces in Africa. The interplay between Kassa, Tewodros the emperor, and Tewodros the protagonist, the literary prophetic character, led to the emergence of the development discourse as the ethos of the modern state of Ethiopia. His chronicler represented Tewodros II as chosen for the mission to civilize:

When God saw all this wickedness he places over *Habaša* [Abyssina] king Tewodros, who did not like adultery, who did not like money, lying, theft, who did not like any kind of dishonesty, who feared God, gave liberally, loved the stranger, who felt compassion for the sick, who partook of the Holy communion with one woman [had only one wife].¹⁹⁹

Zänäb, the chronicler of Tewodros II, documented the exemplary character of the messiah of civilization, the agent of the transformation represented as God's messenger, sent to correct the disorder and ills in the private and public realms. Monogamy, one of the policies of the emperor, defined his exemplary disposition. Zänäb asserted that God "raised up" Tewodros to punish sinners and to put an end to the sin and evil practised in the country.

Like the biblical character David who brought to an end the era of judges,²⁰⁰ Tewodros the protagonist, the awaited prophet in *Fəkkare Iyāsus*, and Kassa who adopted the script and made himself Emperor Tewodros II, are the antithesis of the Ethiopian era of the princes and of tribulation. The discourse of development determined the emperor's political relations with the masses as well as with European forces. Emperor Tewodros understood European material advancement and had a clear picture of global conditions and the need for foreign alliances to realize his prophetic reforms. The following quote from Tewodros's chronicle illuminates this local and global nexus in the making of the ethos of the modern state:

The consul told the king, [Tewodros II] the *śərat*,
[civilization] of British state and military, the *śərat* of

199 See Rubenson, *King of Kings*, p.56.

200 For a comparative story of David and Tewodros see Philip Marsden, *The Barefoot Emperor: An Ethiopian Tragedy* (London: Harper Press, 2007).

the rural community, its administration, the daily life of workers in trains and ships, the *lāmat* [development] of the country, the size of the land mass and taxation from merchants and countrymen in gold. The everyday life of the queen with her relative relaxation and peaceful manner explained to him a story untold before in Ethiopia ... The king [Tewodros II] felt jealous of all this and said my people are ungoverned, otherwise I aspire to realize all this in my country, if I am able to establish friendship with you.

In addition to *Fəkkare Iyāsus*, the global discourse of civilization was another discursive field from which emerged the concepts of *śāltṭane*, *śərat* and *lāmat*. The emperor considered friendship with European states as a form of Christian alliance, important to realizing his dream of developing his country to the level of Britain as described to him by those such as the consul Charles D. Cameron.

However, rebuilding the church did not require the assistance of a foreign alliance, as is seen from the emperor's letters implying that evangelical missions from Europe were not needed, and instead the urgent need was for craft, skills and business. Underlining religious reform as an internal affair, early in 1855 Tewodros wrote a letter in Arabic:

We, too, are Christians from the beginning of time. We do not need anybody to teach us Christianity. From now on, your priests should not come to our country. But as your merchants and craftsmen and other people who come to see the country, whatever sect they belong to, we will treat them with complete friendship and even protect them.²⁰¹

It was the ascendancy, or emergence, of that discourse of civilization that heralded the history of the modern Ethiopian state which can be traced back to 1855, when Kassa crowned himself emperor Tewodros II of Ethiopia, using the legendary prophesy to pronounce his throne name and his policies and to set the horizon to his ambitions. The

201 Rubenson, *Acta Aethiopica*, p.9.

prophecy and its literary representation in *Fəkkare Iyäsus* served as a politico-ideological tool that gave rise to the dialogue of state-led civilization, and to development.

Consideration of the modern as a force of the traditional appears unsubstantiated, given the literary and social roots of the Ethiopian civilizational discourse. Moreover, it could be argued that if *Kəbrä Nəgäst* is a document that had served as a “national epic”²⁰² of the Ethiopian state since the thirteenth century, *Fəkkare Iyäsus* can be considered in this sense as a renewed and modern *Kəbrä Nəgäst*, which provided the emperor with a new political thrust towards national prosperity, justice and peace. The emergence of a developmental dialogue was not conditioned merely by the reaction of Ethiopian elites to nineteenth-century European imperialism nor was it merely the colonization of the Ethiopian public debate by Eurocentrism. It was a discursive, social and textual prescription against internal division and external threat under the conditions of a “competing state formation process”²⁰³ and colonialism in the Ethiopian region.

Such literary genre or discursive tradition had been used as a tool of power in Ethiopia, to “overcome family, tribal and ethnic rivalries and unite the highland peoples against threats from the lowland nomads and pastoralists”.²⁰⁴ The *Fəkkare Iyäsus* and other prophetic texts such as the *Apocalypse of Bharuch (Ra'yä Barok)*, *Apocalypse of Ezra and Dərsanä Raguel* were expressions of political change, advancement and renewal. The quest for a transformational agent and the prophetic king was inherited by the modern state. The political history of modern Ethiopia will be told not from the mythical origin of *Kəbrä Nəgäst* but from the prophecy of *Fəkkare Iyäsus*.

202 Donald Levine, *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

203 Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*.

204 Merid, “Millenarianism and Peasant Movements”, p.168.

Concepts, Discourses and Things: Developmentalism as Civilizational Discourse in the Late Nineteenth Century

From Mənilək I, to Mənilək II
It's been enduring by *śarat*, and righteous
The state of *Ḥabaša*, saved from disruption
It is also God's will, to bless her more.²⁰⁵

THE POEM RECITES the glory of the state of Ethiopia, praising its long survival and endurance from Mənilək, the son of King Solomon, to Mənilək II, an Ethiopian emperor in the second half of the nineteenth century, and narrating the survival of the *Məngəst* (state) from the time of King Solomon. Its base is the *Kəbrä Nəgəst*, the epic story or the myth of origin that connects the power of state to the Solomonic line, praise articulated through the notion of *śarat*, connoting *śarat-Məngəst* and literally meaning order, system, discipline or stability. The nineteenth century witnessed the formation of the modern Ethiopian state. The story can be told from a conceptual and discursive perspective. Without studying development discourse as an end-point, I tell the story of the political state.

Along with the process of modern state formation, an old concept, *śarat*, emerged as a formulation of what was evolving in the political realm. In the nineteenth century, the concept of *śarat* became part of differential relations between the profane and sacred in the Ethiopic (both Ge'ez and Amharic) linguistic world—an object from

205 N.A. *Tarika Nagast Gadal Gabra Kirostos, mistral Selasse ena Zēna feterat* IES. Manuscript no. 2269.

different “planes” or “surfaces of emergence”²⁰⁶ such as the church and the state. Their difference, dispersion, tension, overlaps and relations gave rise to *śarat* as an object, whereas the church and the state, the emperor and the bishop played the authoritative function.

The influential literary and apocalyptic text that led to the discourse of renewal was *Fəkkare Iyäsus*, as discussed in Chapter Four. The recounting of the political and social condition of the country and the prophecy of the coming king, Tewodros, to bring peace, justice and equality was a pre-modern literary and imaginative contribution to the making of the ethos of the Ethiopian modern state.

Kassa Hayelu crowned himself Tewodros II, king of kings, claiming his mission to be the realization of the utopian ideal. As emperor, he introduced a reformist policy, centralizing state power and attempting to transform institutions such as the church, slavery and the military.²⁰⁷ He aspired to initiate the manufacture of weapons and the construction of roads, holding European missionaries and diplomats as captives and forcing them to manage the manufacturing and construction processes. “As King Theodore wanted to civilize his country, he began to make good roads asking us to superintend the work,” Theophilus Waldmeier, one of the European missionaries, wrote in his autobiography.²⁰⁸

The concepts that Ethiopian elites and writers used in order to formulate what the Europeans called civilization and development are the focus of this chapter, the concept of *śarat*, as it emerged in Ethiopia, standing for the ethos and policy of the state. To historicize the political and social events and imaginations in question will involve an exploration of local concepts. Similar to “signs and things”, concepts are “the past in the present witnessing social changes across

206 See Foucault’s description of “surfaces of emergence” as “the fields in which an object first arises. These can be pre-existing fields like family, social group, work situation, etc.” Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, p.41.

207 Shiferaw Bekele, “Monarchical Restoration and Territorial Expansion: The Ethiopian State in the Second Half of the 19th Century,” in *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zénawi*, edited by Gérard Prunier and Eloi Ficquet (London: Hurst, 2015), pp.159–182.

208 Theophilus Waldmeier, *The Autobiography of Theophilus Waldmeier Missionary: Ten Years in Abyssinia and Sixteen Years in Syria*, p.73.

time”.²⁰⁹ These historical changes can be made intelligible by studying the emergence, re-emergence, displacement and disappearance of concepts which inform historical beginnings and re-beginnings—or new beginnings. Social and political formations involve the creation of structures, practices and new meanings; such correlation between historical non-discursive events and discursive emergence indicates that concepts are not mere instruments of cognition but are also mediums of social and political relations, and ipso facto a tool for historical analysis.²¹⁰

Etymologically, the concept of *śarat* is a Ge'ez word with the root word *sār'a*. According to the seventeenth-century Ge'ez-Latin dictionary, *sāra* entails *sanxit* or *sancivit* (sanctioned), *Legem tulit* (law led), *statutum* (statute). The Amharic equivalent is *sāra*, entailing *ordinare*, to make order or to do, prepare, produce or establish something. The concept can take an institutional and contextual form such as *śarat* in the state and in the church as in “when emperor Tewodros II reached Mānz by *Māngəšt* (order of the state or bureaucracy) the bishop *Abunä Sālama* by *śaratä khenāt* (ecclesiastical order) ... the earth had shaken”.²¹¹ One can create *śarat* or order, or organize bureaucracy or ecclesiastical hierarchy, law, cuisine, army, work, religious practice or people.²¹² Bahru Zewde's translation of the concept of *śarat* as “institutionalized governance” is therefore not implausible.²¹³

Śarat is equivalent to Latin terms such as *sanctio*, *decretum*, *consuetudo*, *ordinationes* (sanction, decree, custom and orders) occurring in public domains such as the state and church or in the private domain of the home. It is the opposite of disorder, anarchy and lawlessness.²¹⁴ Its meaning may be applied to the provinces, as in *yä Shawa śarat* or *ye Gojjam śarat*, to mean order of the Šäwa

209 Schoenbrun, *A Green Place*.

210 Pierre Bourdieu, “Symbolic Power.” *Critique of Anthropology* vol. 4, no. 13–14, (1979): pp.77–85

211 Täklä-Iyāus Wakjira. *Yä ityopia Tarik* (written between 1901–16).ed. Srgw Galaw (Addis Ababa: Berhanen,a Sālam Press, 2008), p.215.

212 Kidanä Wäld, *Māṣḥafä säwasəw*, pp.778–79.

213 Bahru, “The Challenge of the New Millennium”, p.36.

214 Kidanä Wäld, *Māṣḥafä säwasəw*, 1972.

and Goggam provinces of Ethiopia.²¹⁵ It can even denote the rule of an individual king or regional lord as, for example, the declaration of Emperor Tewodros in Šäwa which reads “let the šərat of Sahile Selassie persist”.²¹⁶ In the poem that opened this chapter, the survival of the state of Ethiopia is related to its šərat and blessings from God.

The history of the modern Ethiopian state began with the ascendancy of the term šərat. The secular and profane binary discourse embedded in the concept of šərat, connoting civilization, took a religious form. Gilbert Rist’s analysis of “development as element in the religion of modernity”²¹⁷ appears plausible and relevant at the local level. Indeed, civilization and development discourse became the new religion of global modernity—religion, however, was not the only utopia of the pre-modern, and nor is modern secularism free from religion. As Talal Asad argues, “the secular obviously overlaps with the religious”.²¹⁸

The quest for social and political transformation may appear as an element of salvation and religiosity in the pre-modern period, as depicted in the *Fəkkare Iyäsus*, other apocalyptic literature and associated legends. The object of civilization may occur at a certain time and space in multiple institutional set-ups that influence it: the concept of šərat emerged from the institutional set-up of the church and the state, connoting on the one hand the gradual “secularization” of šəratä Mängəšt (order of the state) and on the other hand maintaining the ecclesiastical or theological order (*t, kahnat*). This movement between the sacred and the profane, the theological and the secular, affirms Carl Schmitt’s thesis that “[a]ll significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts”, due less to their “historical development” than their “systemic structure”.²¹⁹ The religious, ecclesiastical or

215 Takälä-Iyasus, *Yä-Ethiopia Tarik*, p.344

216 Wäldä-Mariam, *Chronique of Theodoros II (1855–1868)* ed. E Guilmoto IES ms. 3291.

217 Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London: Zed Books, 2008), p.21

218 Talal Asad, *Formation of the Secular, Christianity, Islam, and Modernity* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.25.

219 Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology, Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab (Chicago and London: University of Chicago

millenarian discourses of the pre-modern were political, literary and social, defying the chronological thesis. The concept of *śarat* emerged in historical events such as local competition for power, state-making wars and institutions such as the church and the state. International dynamics in the Ethiopian region, where both Europeans and Turks (Ottoman and Egyptian) were present, influenced this emergence. It is worth recalling the battle of Däbarq against Egypt in 1848, according to Bahru Zewde the birthplace of Tewodros's interest in the military *śarat* and canon.²²⁰ As a result of this association of the emperor's imagination with a revelation from the battle he fought against Egypt, the concept of *śarat* has been interpreted as "discipline" wherever it is invoked, disregarding its deployment together with *lāmat* to mean civilization and improvement.

The emergence of *śarat* in the discourse of development signifies the transformation of the political relationship between the emperor and the *zega* or masses, with the old dialogue of civilizing the non-Christians through the institution of slavery now widely applied to commoners in general. In the pre-modern, the primary target of the civilizing mission was the *barya* or slave. In the modern, the emperor did not enslave and civilize as previously, but liberated, baptized and trained in art and skills. The *zega* or commoners also became the object of the emperor's civilizing mission, called "*śarat magbat*", to submit to *śarat* or civilization (literally to submit the priests, commoners and soldiers to order and discipline).

The concept of *śarat* was invoked in enunciating the simultaneous assignment to renew the country and rebuild churches as stipulated in *Fakkare Iyäsus*, defining, inventing and transforming the masses into the object of this project. In one of his conversations with clergy, Emperor Tewodros said "*əne śarat, astämrachu beye näw ənji*" (I wanted to teach you *śarat*), referring to their dress code.²²¹ However, his application of the term went beyond dress code and

Press, 1985) [from 1922 original version].

220 Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p.36

221 Zänäb Yä Tēwodros *Tarik* republished, the Amharic version from E. Littmann, the *Chronicle of King Theodore* 1902 by Tesfaye Akalu (Addis Ababa: Far East Trading, 2004), p.62.

office administration.

The clergy was unusually represented in this period as “uncivilized”, joining the peasants and the slaves. The emperor quarrelled with the clergy, including the bishop, in numerous incidents; one of the bones of contention was the emperor’s effort to redistribute land to the peasantry in order to limit the number of priests in each church and force the clergy to engage in farming. The roadmap for this policy was again the literary text of *Fəkkare Iyäsus*, while *śarat* was the most dominant concept in articulating the rebuilding of both church and city.

The most elaborate usage of the concept of *śarat* as a synonym for *lāmat* can be found in one of Emperor Tewodros’s anonymous chronicles describing the advances in Britain as “the *lāmat* [development] of the country”.²²² The detailed description of the British state and the organization of its military; taxation; working conditions; the system of roads, railways and shipping lines; urban conditions; entertainment, games and sanitation was represented by the concept of *śarat*. Interestingly, the less usual term at the time, *lāmat* or development (which has become the most pervasive term in the Ethiopian state’s language since the 1950s and 60s), was used in the chronicle. In nineteenth-century Ethiopia the terms *śarat* and *lāmat* were semantically similar.

In the correspondence (most probably of 1862) of Emperor Tewodros to the European community, and at Gafat where he established workshops for the production of armaments, he stated:

In ancient times, when the Ethiopians were still Jews and pagans a bishop named Käsate Bərhan was sent [to us], who taught us the Christian faith and baptized [us]. You, too, have taught us many things, but in particular, you have opened the eyes of the Abyssinians, who they have abused as a blind donkey; and you started to *civilize* Abyssinia in every aspect. Who will dare to touch you, the teachers of Ethiopia,

222 *Yä Ase Tēwodros Tarik* republished, the Amharic version by an anonymous writer from L. Fussela, 1956 by Tesfaye Akalu (Addis Ababa: Far East Trading, 2004), pp.166–167.

the children of Tewodros? ... Now my friends, we know that *civilization*, culture, art, science, power, dominion and honour cannot save anyone from death. Since, however, God said to Adam, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” it would be a sin to lie down like a sluggard and not care about a country like this, which still lies there in such disarray.²²³

In this letter, the civilizing influence of Europeans is again acknowledged—at the same time as Ethiopia’s lack of advancement. The description of self as alternative signifies the formation of the spirit. Civilization is justified by religion.

It is worth noting the term *śarat* used in Amharic chronicles and letters,²²⁴ entailing the formation of civilization as an object of binary difference between Europe and Ethiopia. The emperor, rather than Europe as colonial saviour, was represented as the midwife of civilization in Ethiopia. For that matter, even in the chronicle of Emperor Mənilək, written at the end of the nineteenth century, this concept, *yä Awropa śarat*, referred to European civilization while the emperor represented the direct champion of Ethiopian civilization.²²⁵

The representation of Ethiopians as uncivilized was quite specific. For example, Emperor Tewodros regularly expressed his lack of interest in European evangelical and missionary endeavours, rating the development of business and skills above evangelization. What worried him, as he wrote in several of his letters to European leaders and diplomats of the time, was the “ignorance” and ill-discipline of his people and the inadequacy of administrative and taxation systems. In a letter to Queen Victoria of Britain he wrote: “You must have heard of the ignorance and blindness of us, the Ethiopian people.”²²⁶ In April 1866, the emperor wrote to a British diplomat:

223 Rubenson, *Acta Aethiopica*, p.188.

224 Aläqä Zänäb Yä Tewodros *Tarik*, Yä Ase Téwodros *Tarik* by anonymous writer and Wäldä Maryam’s *Chronicle of Téwodros* by Tesfaye Akalu, (Addis Ababa: Far East Trading, 2004).

225 Gäbrä-Selläsé Wolde-Aregay, *Tarikä Zämän Zä Dagmawi Mənilək Negusä-Nägäst Zä Ityopyya* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Sälam Printing Press, 1959 Eth. Cal).

226 Rubenson, *Acta Aethiopica*, p.266.

What I require from [you], my friend and adviser, Mr Hormuzd Rassam (Hirmiz Resam), is that you should send me a cannon maker, a gunsmith, an iron smelter, a sapper and a gunner. By the power of God, let all these craftsmen come to me together with the equipment, so that they may return after instructing me.²²⁷

The emperor was in urgent need of armaments, but his demands went beyond, as in another letter of the same year:

I have send Mr Flad (Flat) to Europe. I want skilled workers. I shall receive with pleasure every worker who comes to me. If he stays, I shall show him favor and have him live [here] in happiness. If he wishes to return to his country after having thought his skills, I shall, by the power of God, pay his salary and send him away satisfied with an escort.

The discourse of *šarat* encompassed order and improvement in the market, state, church and at home. It was used in the context of the abolition of slavery and payment of tribute or tax; it was used to express the discipline of the army, in the camp and in battle; it referred to the reorganization of the church, channelling more labour and land to farming. The abolition of polygamy was also an aspect of *šarat*. The concept of *šarat* appears to be a single notion that emerged from two different discursive planes or surfaces: the religious discourse on one hand and the civilizational discourse on the other.

The commonality between the future professed in the *Fəkkare İyäsus* and the promised land of progress, articulated through the concept of *šarat*, was their paternalistic nature. It was the righteous monarch, the messiah, the civilizing prophet, who would transform society. The unconditional submission of the masses to the emperor, hoping to inherit the paradise produced by bifurcated discourse, appears parallel to the unconditional submission of the *barya* hoping to eventually be a slave of God, as the history of Gəbrä Mäsqäl informs us.

These binary expectations animated modern national history along the linear empty time, conceived as negotiated discourse

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²²⁷ Op. cit., p.298.

between two time-frames. The first is the local world manifested in Christian social time and the future utopia as represented in the discursive tradition of *geta-barya* and Fəkkare Iyäsus. The second is the time-frame emerging from global discourse via the creative subjects who had encountered and read the global condition of colonial capitalism. Religiosity was the language and the form through which the local literary, social, political and economic questions were represented. What happened in the late nineteenth century and onwards was the articulation, meeting, negotiation, clash and even displacement between the two discourses, in the condition of European presence.²²⁸

This utopia has shaped the political since the nineteenth century, determining Ethiopian domestic and foreign politics. There was frustration when Europe denied technological assistance. The will to civilize the clergy and the commoners by force caused the slow political death and the ultimate internal—as well as international—confrontation that ended the era of Emperor Tewodros II. The frustration became self-defeating. “After this era, the Emperor began to turn away from *śarat*, both in the issue of tribute with the commoners and consultation with the popes.”²²⁹ In this way, one of the chronicles documented the beginning of the end of Tewodros II. His diplomatic relations with Europe also turned into confrontation when he put the European community into captivity at the Gafat workshop.

The last two letters written by Tewodros depict the most extreme expression of alterity measured by lack of *śarat* or order and discipline or civilization in Ethiopia. After he lost the battle at Mäqdäla against the British army, which had come to free the captives, Tewodros stated in one of his letters to the British commander Robert Napier: “When I used to tell my countrymen, ‘submit to taxation [pay tribute] and discipline [*śarat gäba*]’, they refused and quarrelled with me. But you have defeated me through

228 See Fuad Maki, “Empire and Modernity: Dynastic Centralization and Official Nationalism in Late Imperial Ethiopia”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 24:2 (2011), p.481.

229 Wäldä-Maryam, *Dagmawi Téwodros negusä nägäst zä Ityopya*, p.98

men obedient to discipline [*bä šarat bätägäza säw*].”²³⁰ In the second letter, dated 12 April 1868, he reaffirmed the difference: “I had seen the discipline of the warfare of your country ... my countrymen were becoming lawless and they refused to relent.”

Emperor Tewodros used *šarat* to formulate civilization, needed to build the peaceful and prosperous order written in the prophesy of *Fəkkare Iyäsus* and promised in the global discourse of progress. His successors, the emperors Yoḥannəs IV and Mənilək II used the same approach to communicate the urgent need for development. *Šarat* survived until the beginning of the twentieth century as a key official concept representing the ethos of the modern state of Ethiopia with other similar concepts such as *ṭəbābə* (wisdom) and *bərhan* (light).

Civilization and development were not set in motion by a single concept but by ideas that emerged accompanying the key concept *šarat* as the ideology of the modern Ethiopian state. Development as the ethos of the modern state emerged as result of negotiation between local and global contexts, defying the thesis of derivativeness and the interventionist narrative.

Historians have analyzed the historical events of post-1855 Ethiopia ex post facto, using the concept of modernization, a hegemonic analytical concept in twentieth-century social sciences, the major problem of which is that “it has steadily reinforced the sense of some single moment — call it the modern moment — that by its appearance creates a dramatic and unprecedented break between past and present”.²³¹

The concept of *šarat* itself began to disappear with the emergence of the concept of *šəltāne*, the most pervasive term for the spirit of the Ethiopian state from the early twentieth century until the 1960s. *Šəltāne* is a new concept, semantically expanding from ideas prevalent in pre-modern institutions such as religion, state and slavery.

230 Rubenson, *Acta Aethiopica*, p.354.

231 Appadurai Arjun, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.3.

The Prophet and Objects of Civilization: From *Śarat* to *Śaltane*

In one of the religious texts, of a similar genre to *Fəkkare Iyäsus*, emperor Mənilək II was represented as a founder of the ancient city of David on *Entoto* mountain adjacent to Addis Ababa. Mənilək is described as the true restorer of the ancient glory of the Ethiopian state in his time.²³² This text however was written in the fifteenth century in response to a local crisis similar to *Fəkkare Iyäsus*—but this time it was invoked to represent Emperor Mənilək II and his mission to rebuild the country and restore the city. This shows how texts which represent the discursive tradition are altered to reflect the dynamics of the context.

Simultaneously, the concept of *śaltane* emerged as a discourse of power defining the commoner, peasant and pastoralist, slave and former slave as an object. This could be considered perhaps as another beginning, after numerous beginnings and appearances of multiple concepts and discourses with their respective historicities. Until the 1950s and 1960s, the concept of *śaltane* remained a hegemonic term representing the character, language and discourse of the Ethiopian state, negotiating with the term *ləmat*. It also became an object of public debate in the early twentieth century in the Amharic newspaper *Berhanena Sālam* (Light and Peace) published from 1924 to 1935. *Śaltane* was also considered a domesticated version of the idea of progress which became the subject of inquiry for authors in the first half of the twentieth century.

The concept of *śaltane* negotiated with, co-existed with and eventually replaced the concept of *śarat*. Though the two concepts evolved from different discursive fields, they appeared similar, defining the *zega* as an “aboriginal” civilizational other whereas the emperor was represented as the anointed one, the prophet, and God’s messenger, as the name Theodore connoted. With the ascendancy of the discourse of civilization as the ethos of the state, the representation of the emperors remained similar, though expressed through different concepts. A good example is the similarity in depicting the glorified and messianic representation of the emperor: “Mənilək was not

²³² See introduction of *Dr̥sane Raguale and Eural* written in the 15th and 16th century but published 1950, Addis Ababa version.

crowned like others. God chose and sent Mənilək to save her [Ethiopia] from her suffering, crying of the people's ignorance."²³³

This appears strikingly similar to the way Tewodros's chronicler represented the emperor as saviour of the nation. Mənilək II was glorified as a true prophet who would bring the utopia expressed through both concepts: *śarat* and *śəltane*. It was *yä Awropa śarat* that was used to refer to the European order or civilization that defined the mission of the emperor.²³⁴ The emperor was described as an exclusive enunciator of *śəltane* and represented as an agent of civilization to the *zega* and an abolitionist and civilizer to the slaves.

The concept and discourse of *śəltane* emerged under institutions and historical events, subject to the political relationships of the pre-modern, especially of slavery. It is worth recalling that the conceptual emergence itself exhibited semantic expansion. The root term of *śəltane* was related to power: *śəgawi śəltan*, entailing earthly or profane power, and *Mānfāsawi śəltan* is a spiritual or divine power best exemplified by the bishop's authority.²³⁵ The term *śəltāna* was a process to "rectify or renovate the incongruous and fill or complete the unfilled or the incomplete".²³⁶ It connotes quantitative or qualitative change and enhancement. In Ge'ez, *tasālāt' bā śəgakä* and *zäysält'* bā Mānfāsawi entails the refinement of the profane and of the sacred realms. *Śəltāna* was one of the discourses of power determining and legitimizing the power dynamics of the Ethiopian slave-master relationship. Being *śəlut* entailed the baptism and acculturation of the slave, which came to be broadly used to mean the transformation of the commoner into a cultivated subject.

Unlike *śarat*, *śəltane* was not an old term, having been coined around the second decade of the twentieth century. It was excellent representation of the role of creative subjects, political elites and masses alike in the authorship of a discourse of development; *śəltane* and its emergence as a key term in the twentieth century

233 Afäwark Gabra Iyasus *Dagmawi Ats'é Mineilk*, Rome 1901, republished in Addis Ababa, 2006. [Translation by the author].

234 Gabra Sellasé, *Tarika Zaman Za Dagmawi Mənilək*.

235 Dästa, *Addis Yä Bamarāñña Mäzəgäbä Qalat*, p.825.

236 Op. cit., p.885.

depicts the birth of a new concept shaped by the legacy of pre-modern concepts and by global contact with the mobility of new concepts. The temporal connection with the past and the spatial link with the outside world conditioned the birth of the new concept, *śāṭtane*, and its gradual replacement of *śarat*, as the pervasive term. *Ləmat* as a concept remained as the secondary term, until it eventually emerged as the most pervasive term in the second half of the twentieth century.

Most texts published in the first decade of the twentieth century did not use the term *śāṭtane*.²³⁷ Even Hərüy Wäldä-Sellāsé's travel diary of his European trip did not deploy *śāṭtane* in articulating the progress of Europe.²³⁸ In his next book, written in 1916 (Ethiopian calendar), Hərüy used the concept *śāṭtane* for progress, improvement and development. Referring to Queen Zāwditu and Prince Täfäri, he wrote: "it was public story and euphoria that they would lead Ethiopia on the path of *śāṭtane* and knowledge".²³⁹ The term *śāṭtane* must have been coined after 1913 but before 1916 as Gäbrä Həywät used the concept of *ləmat* instead of *śāṭtane* in his book, written in 1912. Hərüy's 1916 travel account is one of the earliest documents to deploy the concept of *śāṭtane*; afterwards the concept became a common term in the articulation of the Ethiopian state—up until the 1970s.

The transition from *śarat* to *śāṭtane* occurred in the context of the European scramble for Africa. In the colonial perspective Ethiopian barbarity was defined by the practice of slavery. It was this that Italy used as a pretext to advance its colonial ambitions. Italian "aggression was partly justified as civilizing mission" against the tradition of slavery.²⁴⁰ The Eurocentric conception of civilization was adopted to prepare Ethiopia for colonial conquest. Slavery was

237 See for example, Gäbrä-Səllase, *Tarikä Zāmān Zä Dagmawī Mənilək*; Afāwārq, *Dagmawī Aše Mənilək*, 1901; or Təbya Gäbrä Həywät, *Aše Mənilək-na Ityopya* and *Māngəšt na Yä Hezb Astādādär*. None of them used the term *śāṭtane*.

238 Hərüy Wäledä-Sellāsé, *Yä Ityopya leu'kan Buden Bä-Aweropana bā-Mākakälegñaw Mesraq ed. Bahru Zewde* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Academic Science, 2009 Eth. Cal/ published 2016[1903 original]).

239 Hərüy Wäledä-Sellāsé *Dästana Keber YäItyopya Māngest Alga Wārasha Endätasé Le'ul Täfäri Mäkwännən Wädä Awropa Sihədu-na Simäläsu yāmāngädachāw Akwanhwan* (Addis Ababa, 1916 Eth. Cal.).

240 Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p.94.

represented as “a crime for which Ethiopia should be deprived of her liberty”.²⁴¹

The disempowering colonial implementation of civilization, with its contestation between colonial power and the Ethiopian elite, had already transformed political relationships, both at home and in relationships with foreign powers. As Fuad Makki put it, “global ideological and discursive themes were necessarily refracted and articulated with internal social and political dynamics to shape the character of ... [any local historical] process”.²⁴² The key historical process in Ethiopia was the formation of the modern state, replacing the pre-modern competition for hegemony with the dialectics of tributary power relations.

The relative lag of Ethiopia was acknowledged on the Ethiopian side. The times of dystopia, trial and tribulation described in *Fakkare Iyäsus* were the most extreme form of admitting the social, economic, natural and ecclesiastical crisis. Emperor Tewodros II himself perceived this gap, and lack of *šarat*, as a major cause of losing the war against Egypt and British forces. The concept of *šalṭane* articulated this feeling of lack, and of the urgency to correct it. It became the mission of successive emperors to ensure the survival of Ethiopia as an independent state. The internal, local, social and literary dynamics shaped innovation, negotiation and re-articulation.

In this debate and in the politics of representation, colonialism itself was redefined and articulated as slavery, represented through the language of slavery in early twentieth-century Ethiopia and equated with collective enslavement. When Italy used the presence of slavery as pretext for its colonial ambition, its position was: “As you [Ethiopia] do not want to abolish slavery, this gives me [Italy] [the right] to enslave you,” and “beautiful justice, the Roman way, which makes us remember the destruction of the Cartagena!”²⁴³ Subsequent to the Adwa victory period at the end of the nineteenth century, there was “a growing realization among the rulers that if

241 Kebede Mickael, *Ethiopia and Western Civilization* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Sälam Printing, 1958), p.58.

242 Maki, “Empire and Modernity”, p.281.

243 Mikael, *Ethiopia and Western Civilization*, p.60.

their country had to keep its independence it had to modernize.”²⁴⁴

The war against colonialism was seen as a struggle to escape enslavement in the twentieth century. In the Ethiopian political discourse, civilization was achieved through capture, enslavement, training, baptism and, eventually, freedom. Analogously, the concept of national independence and freedom as utopia emerged in the condition of slavery and resistance to colonial civilization. This is well captured in one of the chronicles:

The refusal of Ethiopia should not be blamed, with regards to those men [colonizers] who have a serious passion to expand the progress of *śāṭtane* [civilization]. Because it is known that, these people oppose the freedom [of the state] covertly.²⁴⁵

The self-representation of colonial powers as agents of civilization in Africa, was well understood—with all its costs—by the locals, as the same discourse defining the emperor as exclusive agent of civilization and abolition had already been raised. The commoners or the *zega*, like the slaves, were objects of *śāṭtane*, defined by lack, which could be filled through mentorship by the messianic emperor and his “patriots of civilization”, his elites.

Temples of Civilization: Mediating Between the Emperor and the *Zega*

The construction of bridges was unknown in the country until Mənilək brought in salaried foreign workers to construct them. Ancient kings built the bridge on the Abay (Blue Nile) but the enemy destroyed it and afterwards no one used the broken bridge to cross the river. Mənilək’s workers renovated the bridge. Thereafter, everyone crossing the Nile by this bridge wished longer life to emperor Mənilək and his queen and blessed his *Māngəšt* (state power) to remain in the hands of their descendants and to glow and flourish eternally, like a plant growing near a river.

244 Shiferaw, *Monarchial Restoration*, p.177.

245 Gäbrä-Egziabher Elyas: *Yä Tarik Mastawäsha*, (memoir of history) 1901–1922 EC. (Institute of Ethiopian Studies cat. No. 2284.297).

This is from the chronicle of Mənilək II (1889–1913), describing the material aspects of civilization or development, as we call them, temples of civilization emerging simultaneously with the dialogue and its authors. In this triple connection between the subject, the discourse and things, the temples of civilization were the things, or the material representation and symbols of the ethos of the modern state. The *zega*, using the bridge, a portent of utopia, saw the ultimate power of the emperor, who had sponsored its construction. In the story, the *zega* becomes an obedient subject who prays daily for longer life and stable state power; the bridge is the link between utopia and subjugation.

The bridge as a temple of civilization began to play as an objectified form to read history through Marx's commodity fetish which concealed the political relationship between emperor and *zega*.²⁴⁶ The emergence of these "commodity-forms", or things influencing the discourse of civilization, must have shaped political relations between the ruler and the ruled. It is these infrastructures and other commodity-things of civilization that I call temples of civilization owing to their power of appeal and political efficacy in the production of consent and their negotiated form as they coexisted with the construction of churches.

The chronicle of Emperor Mənilək and other documents such as memoirs tell the spectacular entrance of these temples of civilization into the public space and becoming a popular topic of conversation. The building of infrastructure became a major part of political debate between the emperor and the *zega*. The blessing of the *zega* seems to be a corrupted reproduction of the blessing given to one of the Ethiopian emperors, *aše Fasil* (Fasilädäs) (1632–1667), who is credited with the construction of bridges. Emperor Fasil first built the bridge on the Nile on the recommendation of the bishops and monks, as compensation for his violence against the church. Tradition has it that *aše Fasil* went to the monks and asked what he should do to receive mercy and inherit heaven. The recommendation was to save

.....
246 My attempt here is to analyze the objectified civilizational utopia in comparison to the discursive utopia to see the two in the context of the Ethiopian political.

the *balhagär* or *zega* from being drowned in the Nile while trying to cross the river in rainy seasons. The king ordered the construction of a bridge on the Nile, and thereafter, when crossing, the people began to bless the soul of emperor Fasilädäs to rest in peace in heaven.²⁴⁷ The relationship was triangular, involving God who delivers mercy, the Emperor who constructed the temple (the bridge) and the *zega* who prayed for the emperor in exchange for the use of the bridge.

During the reign of emperor Mäniläk II, and with the emergence of the discourse of civilization, the triangular relationship was altered. The construction of temples of civilization such as infrastructure projects were made as an exchange: the *zega*'s submission and prayer for the stability of the emperor's power. The wishes of the sovereigns and the blessing of the *zega* appeared different in content, although the religious form persisted: the *zega* began to wish for stable state power to the emperor and his descendants on earth, rather than wishing the king's soul to rest peacefully in heaven—an example of the secularization of theology and religiosity in the politics of modern Ethiopia.²⁴⁸ Such religiosity of the modern political as is manifested in the form of temples of civilization also emerged as negotiated discourse between the local and the global religion of modernity.²⁴⁹

The local religiosity in the discourse of civilization can be seen from the parallel presentation and representation of the rebuilding of the church and the renewal of the city or the country, as discussed in *Fäkkare Iyäsus*. The building of churches was an age-old custom of each king of kings of Ethiopia. The source of the legitimacy of Solomonic and other previous dynasties was divine power with the title of “the elect of God”, manifest in the emperors' commitment to build churches, temples and monasteries.²⁵⁰ The building of the city, or the temples of civilization, and the building of the church

247 See *Yä-Gondar Tarik* Manuscript no. 459 Institute of Ethiopian Studies; Täklä Şadiq Mäkwäriya, *Yä Ityopia Tarik kääşe Ləbnä Dəngəl əskä Aşe Tewodros*; and Desse Kaleb *Tarika Nagast kă Minilke ahdey eske Menlike kletey* (Addis Ababa: Mahbre Kidusan Press 2007).

248 Schmitt, *Political Theology*.

249 Rist, *The History of Development*.

250 See Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba*; Taddesse, *Church and State*; Crummey, *Land and Society*.

co-existed and were related, both considered symbols of Ethiopian civilization in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.²⁵¹ Romanticizing the temples of civilizations, the following poem narrates the glory of Mənilək:

The train has shuttled; the telephone has spoken
In whose reign were these made to happen?

Mənilək is an angel; my gut feeling has an answer.²⁵²

Mənilək is an angel of civilization here, while technological innovation and material production are temples heralding the journey towards *Śəltane*—civilization. Technology and infrastructural construction were considered miracles in the period, representing the emperor as a prophet.²⁵³ The temples of civilization such as trains and telephone, bridges and roads emerged as non-discursive representations, conditioning the emergence and evolution of the discourse of *Śəltane*, and were also represented as *yä śəltane godanawoch*, straits of civilization,²⁵⁴ in a memoir written in the first decades of the twentieth century. All were represented as *yä śəltane irmjawoch* (marches of progress). These temples of civilization signify the coming of an optimistic future and the redemption of the *zega* under the leadership of the emperor. This material form of civilization symbolized the ethos of the state in transforming the political relationship by mediating between the emperor and the *zega*. The emergence of commodities—things—as having a meditational role reflects the relationship between the theological and the political in the Schmittian sense.²⁵⁵ Despite this, neither the modernization school nor the Marxists considered commodity-things as an aspect of the political in Ethiopia. The non-human is always

251 Gäbrä Egziabher *Ya Tarik Mastawäsha: Leyu Leyu Yä Tarik Mastawäshawoch* and Märsé Häzän Wäldä- Kirkos *Yä zämän Tarik Tiztayé Kayähut Ina Käsmahut* 1896–1922 Addis Ababa Addis Ababa University Press, 2002.

252 Käbbädä Täsäma, *Leyu Leyu Yä Tarik Mastawäsahawoch* unpublished memoir. page 17, IES Manuscript number 2247.

253 In the post-Adwa period Manlike introduced the new *śəltane*, one being the telephone: “it was considered as a miracle among the population”. See the Memoir of Märsé Häzän, *Yä Zämän Tarik Təzzətaye*, p.21.

254 Gäbrä Egziabher, *Yä Tarik Mastawäsha*.

255 Schmitt, *Political Theology*.

secondary. The binary—of the West and non-West and the human and non-human—are defining elements in the historiography of the modern.²⁵⁶ Social science itself is the affirmation of similar binaries such as “real and representation, objects and ideas, nature and techno-science, land and the abstraction of law, the country and the map”.²⁵⁷ These multiple binaries represent the features of modern historiography and philosophy that limit our understanding of the political and what temples of civilization—as commodity-things—do in our politics.²⁵⁸

Temples of civilization had considerable space during the emergence of advancement as the ethos of the state in Ethiopia. They were popular in the public representation of the deeds of the emperor as prophetic miracles. The leadership of the emperor in the national civilizational journey was represented analogically with climbing a mountain; the emperor’s rulership over the *zega* was represented as him leading them to *Yä śāḷtane Tārara*, ‘the mountain of civilization’.²⁵⁹ It was justified in the same way that the master enslaves the slave to transform him into *śaluṭ* or *śāḷṭun* in both profane and sacred senses of the term.

As the slave was defined by the lack of spiritual or secular ability, the *zega* was represented by failure, and as the uncivilized other who could not even follow the enlightened prophet of civilization, the king of kings, Mənilək II. The allegorical significance of mountain in Ethiopia symbolizes the difficulty of the journey of *śāḷtane* as result of its steepness. That is why it needed the prophetic emperor and exceptional authority and God’s gift to be the midwife of civilization and protector of the nation and its political freedom.

Only a few in the political elite, *Yä śāḷtane Arbāññōč* or patriots of civilization, were able to follow the enlightened King Mənilək in his leadership towards the mountain of civilization, while the *zega* (the people) found it difficult to climb the mountain. This shows how

256 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

257 Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt Techno-politics, Modernity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, p.301).

258 Latour, *We have Never Been Modern*.

259 Gäbrä Egziabher, *Yä-Tarik Mastawäsha*.

the discourse of civilization, in its emergence, was deployed to define, prepare and represent the *zega* as object of civilization whereas the ruler is the agent, exclusive enunciator and midwife of civilization and development.

The discourse of *śāḥṭane*, whatever form it took, discursive or commodity-things, appeared totalizing. However, it has never been total, as it was articulated and negotiated at different levels. The same language of rule appeared as a language of resistance from the *zega* and political elites. From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the history of Ethiopia could be said to demonstrate that the discourse of civilization and development was a political dialogue as language of rule and resistance, resilience and survival, debate and conversation in both local and anti-colonial politics.²⁶⁰ Civilization under a national leader was itself presented as an anti-colonial measure, as described by one of the chroniclers of civilization:

In the old days, ignorance had held sway. Today, however, a strong and unassailable enemy called the European mind has risen ... Whoever opens his door to [the European mind] prospers; whoever closes his door will be destroyed. If our Ethiopia accepts European mind, no one would dare to attack her; if not she will disintegrate and be enslaved...²⁶¹

Śāḥṭane is presented here as a survival issue. In critical development literature, the representation of the state or the emperor as an agent of development, and the simultaneous definition and representation of the people as objects of civilization and development, has been at the centre of disempowering and depoliticizing the masses.²⁶² However, the politics of *śāḥṭane* (or civilization in the Ethiopian case) indicates that the case is not always the same. The discourse was not always total—or those using it to rule do not always control the

260 Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, p.24.

261 Gäbrä Heywät Baykedan quoted in Bahru, *Pioneers of Change*, p.110.

262 Frederick Cooper, "Introduction", in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* Edited by Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1997).

discourse and the language.

The quest for peace, justice and equality in Ethiopia had been social and popular, and had had a literary origin from the beginning. Development involved a long process of localization, translation, negotiation and the appropriation of the conceptual and discursive tools allowing a certain type of politics to occur. A very good example is a resistance poem that disparaged the progressive deeds of Emperor Mənilək: the poem is a conservative force, an antithesis to innovation and change,²⁶³ condemning the temples of civilization and their impact on the everyday life of the common people:

They made abattoir to us, to butcher our oxen
They imported a train, to takeaway away the hide
and skin
They built a school, to convert and take our children
Muse Tena²⁶⁴ has built in front of our father,
Methewos
We are yearning for the end of all these!²⁶⁵

The contestation depicts the authoritarian model of progress, which excludes one part of a community while benefiting another part. The poem refers to the political and economic marginalization and socio-cultural damage caused by development.

The presentation of the emperor as progressive and prophetic resulted neither in a disempowered nor a depoliticized mass. There is always a space for resistance voices—not by rejecting the discourse of rule or by initiating a new discourse but, rather, by re-using the discourse of civilization itself as a medium for critical voices. It is this that led to the emergence of a vibrant discursive political community that engaged in public debate of civilization and development in the newspapers.

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- 263 Richard Pankhurst, “Misoneism and Innovation in Ethiopian History.” Paper presented to the First International Congress of Africanists, Accra. Revised and enlarged in the *Ethiopian Observer* (1964) 8, pp.287–320.
- 264 Muse Hana was one of the first foreign teachers of English, Arabic and French to the children of the nobility. See the memoir of Ras Emiru Həylä-Selassie. *Kayāhut Kāmastawsāw*, manuscript written in a prison in Italy, 1929 (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2002).
- 265 Kebede, *Leyu leyu Ya tarik Mastawesahawoch*.

Much of the local resistance in twentieth-century Ethiopia took a form of agrarian revolt or urban student protest. The *zega* never remained mere disciples to religiosity of civilization and development, nor permanently approved the candidacy of the emperors as exclusive midwife of civilization. The seductive temples of civilization did not silence the *zega* and the progressive elites.

These examples show the two extreme forms of deployment of the discourse of civilization. However, as will be seen in the subsequent chapters, the political was not limited to the politics of rule and resistance.

From Slaves to Palace Intellectuals: Subjects and the Discourse of Development in Ethiopia to the 1920s

IN SEPTEMBER 1916, a eunuch who was a guard and attendant of the empress's royal hall, stared at Täklä Hawaryat, one of the first generation of Western-educated Ethiopian intellectuals. In the royal hall, a meeting was being held, between veteran nobles from Mənilək's time, to decide the power transition after the overthrow of *Ləğ* Iyasu, the legitimate successor of Emperor Mənilək II. The man the eunuch was staring at stood out owing to his relative youth and Western style of dress. Täklä Hawaryat was a stranger and, in the eunuch's opinion, should not have been in the royal palace. Täklä Hawaryat returned his gaze and whispered to him, "I have permission to attend this meeting, and I will not encroach on your territory again." The eunuch was unconvinced and began to pull Täklä Hawaryat away. Täklä Hawaryat repeated himself, more loudly, emphasizing that he would not come back to another meeting. Then one of the nobles affirmed that Täklä Hawaryat's attendance was welcome. Täklä Hawaryat told the eunuch that he was not there to displace him.

Encounters between Western educated intellectuals and local elites often resulted in tension because of the competition for power. An example was Täklä Hawaryat's relationship with those who served *Ləğ* Iyasu, such as the poet and singer Nəgadräs Täsämma, owing to the politics of access to the prince. In the eyes of Täklä Hawaryat, Nəgadräs Täsämma was responsible for influencing *Ləğ* Iyasu towards leisure, drinking, relaxation and music—to the extent

of disregarding his royal responsibilities. Täsämma's livelihood depended on appeasing the royal men, including the prince, using his artistic skills and knowledge of the emerging city of Addis Ababa. The discourse of development was often utilized among the elites to displace each other.

In his autobiography, Täklä Hawaryat wrote that serving Ethiopia by being an adviser to the emperor was his principal ambition. He repeatedly affirmed that he did not want to be the personal attendant of princes and kings unless they committed to *ləmat* and *śəltane*. He had always seen himself as an agent of civilization and development and was committed to Ethiopia, not to rulers, whether *Ləǧ* Iyasu or Prince Täfäri. His experience in Europe had given him political leverage and he had more self-confidence than the elites who had no experience overseas.

Täklä Hawaryat did not realize that he and his fellow Western educated intellectuals were displacing the royal eunuch, the royal slaves and the servile subjects of the empire. By increasing their numbers they were displacing the elites of pre-modern power. Western education and their self-consciousness as agents and subjects of development became a new source of power. The power of the elite slaves and captives gradually diminished in the emerging modern state in which a professional army replaced the historic role of slaves and captives.

The princes and emperors, however, saw them not as advisers but as a type of servant—as prince Täfäri affirmed to him later, saying that Täklä Hawaryat had been his father's servant and was now one of his. When he heard this, Täklä Hawaryat wrote: “these big-headed individuals do not know that there is a natural law that protects the freedom of people from any infringement in the name of servility, tribute payer, slave”.²⁶⁶ The emperor Ḥaylä Selassie I chose to combine the old and new political elites to reproduce his own power.

The exclusive meeting in the small hall was held in the presence of the eunuch and Täklä Hawaryat. It had been called by one of the veteran patriots of Mənilək, the minister of war, *fitawrari*

266 Täklä-Hawaryat, *Autobiography (Yä Heywoté Tarik)* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1998), p.346.

(commander) Habtä Giyorgis. He invited only the elder nobles, telling the younger (including the Western educated) to accompany Prince Täfäri Mäkwännən. One of the patriots of civilization, Täklä-Hawaryat, invited himself, at the request of Prince Täfäri, who wanted detailed information of the decision from an alternative source.

The veteran war minister Habtä Giyorgis, the bishop, and four other nobles gathered to decide the politics of transition from Iyasu to the leading candidate, Prince Täfäri. The nobility however decided to share the throne between Empress Zäwditu and Prince Täfäri Mäkwännən, who was given the additional title *Ras* (head). The shared throne was a compromise between the old and the new generations and political elite. Arguments about religion and civilization were both utilized to justify the coup. The name Mənilək itself was needed to sustain the political kingdom. Täfäri Mäkwännən was selected as political leader because through him the nobles aspired to maintain their status in the politics of Ethiopia. The intellectuals, through Täfäri, participated in the politics.

The shared throne from 1916 to 1930 also symbolizes the two political forces and their differences in the pace and content of Ethiopian development.²⁶⁷ The coup against Iyasu, justified by the binary discourses of religion and civilization, was mirrored by the bifurcated discourse itself. The empress limited her role to the building and renewing of the church.²⁶⁸ Everyday politics and the renewal of the city were left to Täfäri. The decision at the royal palace offers a window into the competition. After the meeting at which Täklä-Hawaryat witnessed the failure of Ləǧ Iyasu, he wrote:

If we see the event that occurred in Ethiopia through the European worldview, the performance looks like a republican moment. The minister of war *Fitawrari* Habtä-Giyorgis performed like a president, others like ministers *Bajrond* (royal treasurer) Yegazu played a role of the prime minister while the middle nobilities

267 See Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, pp.128–129.

268 See Gäbrä Egziabhér, Yä Hiwät Mastawäsha, in *Prowess, Piety and Politics The Chronicle of Abeto Iyasu and Empress Zewditu of Ethiopia (1909–1930)*. Recorded by Aleqa Gebre-Egziabher Élyas. Edited and translated by Reidulf K. Molvaer (Cologne: Rudiger Koppe, 1994), pp.161–62.

and lower officials as people's representatives. The decision was made based on majority vote. The thing becomes clear when we think aloud like this: Might belong to masses. No doubt about its implementation if it is the preference of the people.²⁶⁹

Täklä Hawaryat, as an intellectual and man of the emperor, imagined the meeting as a republican moment. He thought through it as the improvement and the progress that the educated intellectuals dreamed about: political transformation into a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary republic. Täklä Hawaryat forgot the royal eunuch who had attentively served the birth of the diarchy. Indeed, those bodies were the most silenced subjects in the political history of the country. If we are convinced of Täklä Hawaryat's articulation about the republican moment—and the political transition was not a coup but a sort of impeachment—we can give a name to the role of the eunuch and his fellow royal and domestic eunuchs and slaves in the making of the pre-modern and modern state of Ethiopia. In this chapter, my preoccupation is with political trajectory and the theoretical writings of two prominent intellectuals. These scholars represent a generation of intellectuals who gradually occupied a key political space below the emperor, replacing the elite slaves and captives. They became writers, advisers and ministers, deploying the political-economic transformation of Ethiopia as discursive tool to justify their entry into politics.

Literary works such as novels and poems, travel memoirs,²⁷⁰ biographies and autobiographies,²⁷¹ were embedded in the discourse of *śālṭane* and *lāmat* in twentieth-century Ethiopia. The first Amharic novel was about the state formation process, slavery, war and the

269 Täklä Hawaryat, *Autobiography*, p.302.

270 For example, Afäwäraq Gäbrä Iyyäsus *Le'ul Alga wärash Täfäri Mäkwännan KäAddis Ababa Wädä Adän Yäwäradubät Mekenyat*. Addis Ababa, 1915 Eth. Cal.; Heruy Wäldä-Sellāsē *Dästa-na keber Yälyopiya Māngest Alga Wārash-na Endārasē Le'ul Täfäri Mäkwännan wädä Awropa Sihēdu-na Simäläsu yāmāngädachāw Akwahwan* (an account of Prince Täfäri's trip to and from Europe), Addis Ababa, 1916 EC.; and *Yä Le'elt Wäyzäro Mānān Māngäd Bälyyārusalēm-na BāMeser* (an account of Empress Mānān's travels to Jerusalem and Misr), Addis Ababa, 1916 Eth. Cal.

271 See for example Heruy Wäldä-Sellāsē *YäHeywat Tarik* (Biography), Addis Ababa, 1915 Eth Cal.

country's progress towards a secular state. The first Amharic play was based a fable written to discipline prince Iyasu. The first two newspapers, such as *A'emer* (the oldest Amharic weekly newspaper founded by Emperor Mənilək and published from 1895 to the 1920s), and *Berhanena Sälam*, represented the product of *śāḥṭane* and *ləmat*. The mission of the first generation of Western-educated scholars was to instruct the young prince *lāḡ* Iyasu, to awaken him into his role, to teach him the historical task he was to undertake as the prophet of civilization. The writings of Gäbrä Həywät Baykādañ and Täklä Hawaryat Täklä Maryam are representative of the intellectual tradition of the period. Gäbrä Həywät's work *Aṣe Mənilək ena Ityopya* (Emperor Mənilək and Ethiopia) was published in 1912 and *Māngəst ena Yähezb Astädadär* (State and People's Governance), written in 1917, was posthumously published in 1923. Gäbrä Həywät wrote *Aṣe Mənilək ena Ityopya* for the inheritor of Mənilək's legacy, the prince Iyasu whose honorific royal title *Ləḡ* signified the prophet of civilization. This work combines a critique of Ethiopian historiography and an analysis of social transformation. Anchored in the history of Ethiopia, the book prescribes a state of developmentalism that underlines the role of the prince.

His second book analyzed the "material lag" and state formation in Ethiopia, prescribing a number of state-centric solutions. It built on most of the theses of the first book, following a historical and political economy approach. The book is about *Yä Həzb Astädadär* or people's governance, a discipline that studies the singular road to societal development or destruction (*ləmat* or *ṭəfat*).²⁷² Covering a wide range of political economy, Gäbrä Həywät discusses the foundation of wealth and power, the role of the state in transforming society, agriculture and its transformation as applied to his contemporary Ethiopia. Much attention has been paid to his microeconomic analysis of things like labour, but his work is also notable for theorizing the state formation process nexus with social transformation, supplemented by his endorsement, arguably (but plausibly) of state developmentalism. The book is addressed to the leader, indicating

272 Gäbrä Həywät, *Māngest Yä Hezb Astädadär*, p.33.

what must be done when it comes to development. It is one of the earliest articulations and theorizations of development by scholars educated in the West.

Täklä-Hawaryat's book *Fabula* was a fable specifically written to awaken and discipline *Ləǧ Iyasu*, the fifteen year-old prince, from his playful tendencies after he assumed political power succeeding the emperor Mənilək II. Täklä-Hawaryat was a renowned public figure, active in palace politics, putting his theory of development into practice.

Both intellectuals, representative of the many scholars who went to Europe during the era of Emperor Mənilək II and returned between the 1890s and 1900s, struggled to influence political leaders and the public by their writing. In Ethiopian historiography, the first generation of Western-educated intellectuals have been considered as exclusive movers of change against tradition, categorized as “pioneers of change” or “reformist intellectuals”, but also represented as mere “conscripts of modernity”,²⁷³ Eurocentric scholars who dislocated the ancient Ethiopian tradition.²⁷⁴ Debunking both representations, I hope to depict their rightful place as writers and thinkers within the wider discursive tradition. They were speaking, thinking, writing and creative subjects whose voice was perhaps merely a thread in the rabbit's fur. Their work can be considered as the site of the history of ideas and intellectuals in the sense of the Cambridge school, which focuses on prominent scholars and their texts to explore the evolution of concepts and ideas. It is not the nature of the discourse or the context that matters most in a given text, but, rather, the ideas and their intended meaning. I consider what the intellectuals did in writing the texts. Their writings, I argue, contributed to the process of development. Like Gramscian organic intellectuals, they had a link with the community, but their major role was to put forward an “equivocal relationship to hegemony, a complex negotiation with the dominant group that

273 David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). I used the phrase because it captures well the criticism of the intellectual in Ethiopian historiography.

274 Messay, *Survival and Modernization*.

is characterized by a self-conscious difference and defiance”.²⁷⁵ I analyze the mediatory role, in the process of articulation and negotiation, between the dominant and the popular in the history of Ethiopian state developmentalism. Without erasing the diversity or even the agency of the social groups who were subjected to the discourse of civilization, I consider it as a totality of networks in which these speaking, knowing, thinking and creative subjects were dispersed. Their unity can only be intelligible through discursive formation, which was totalizing and hegemonic. In so doing, though, I explore the hermeneutical contribution of the speaking subject in a few sections of this chapter. My intention is to write the history of the relationship between the political subject and the dominant discourse of development which shaped the mode of subjectivity. In addition to the discursive history, I write of political subjects writing their own history within the fragments of the hegemonic discourse. Although the discourse of civilization is the subject of my study, in this chapter, I found it appropriate to bring the speaking subject, the origin, the author and creative subject into my analysis. Indeed, I declare in large part the death of the author, taking the discourse of civilization as a monument in itself, discourse-object,²⁷⁶ but must also re-declare “long live the author”: I bring the authoring, thinking and creativity of the Emperor’s men into this genealogical discussion of Ethiopian developmentalism. I bring forward the author because the political relationship between the intellectuals and the political elite became a dominant historical event in twentieth-century Ethiopia. The emperor’s men who authored such books were the speaking subjects in a wider discursive tradition. They were not the exception but, rather, a group among many speaking subjects within the pervasive ethos of *śāḷtane* and *ləmat*.

My intention, in engaging the theoretical and philosophical works, is on one hand to depict the depth of the negotiation process and on the other hand to capture the dispersed subjectivity from which each author was writing, though all were speaking from within the discourse of state developmentalism which, although pervasive, was

275 Farred, *What’s My Name?*.

276 Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.139.

neither total nor politicized the masses as helpless victims. The notion of hegemony, as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe argue, alludes to an absence of totality and signifies contingency, fragmentation and the fissure of the discourse.²⁷⁷ Hegemony as an “articulatory practice” allowed the possibility of the articulation and re articulation of the creative subject’s voice coming from within, permitting the historicization of both the discourse (with its temples of civilization), and the political subject, on the same analytical framework.

My preoccupation with their life and work is not in reconstructing a comprehensive intellectual history. It is to excavate the evolution of development that bridges—at least chronologically—the pre-twentieth-century ethos of the state and the contemporary dialogue. Such exercise clarifies the distinct discursive contours of the present politics of development. I revisit the theoretical writings and the political engagement of these scholars to study the formation and consolidation of the ethos of the modern Ethiopian state. Returning from Europe equipped with Western education, skills and etiquette, this new class of intellectual gradually began to occupy key positions as advisers and ministers to newly established institutions. They became the first heads of emerging political and bureaucratic institutions and contributed immensely to nation-building projects in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Western-educated scholars became key political subjects of the time, as slaves and captives gradually disappeared from the public space. The contestation between eunuch and Täklä Hawaryat represents the displacement of old political elites such as captives and elite slaves by these emerging Western-educated classes of the elite.

Enlightening the Prince: Writing *Śāṭane* and *Ləmat* into History

In the last decade of nineteenth century, the object of the discourse of Ethiopian *śāṭane*, the slave, was replaced by the *zega* as an object of the emperor’s project of civilization. In the early twentieth century,

277 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 2001), p.7.

Gäbrä Heywät's first book depicts *Ləḡ Iyasu* as the object to be enlightened and informed about his historical task. As a prescriptive text to the upcoming emperor, akin to Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*, the book depicts a particular power relationship that involves the intellectuals and the political elites of the period. By writing, intellectuals occupied a different political status as discipliners, mentors, teachers and advisers to the masses—and even to the emperors and princes. The discourse of civilization created a new site of power when Western-educated intellectuals sent abroad by the emperor returned with academic experience in foreign countries which gave them an authoritative role, informing, enlightening, teaching, and directing the multiple objects and sites of civilization such as the *zega* and even the upcoming prophet of civilization, *Ləḡ Iyasu*. Because of their influential role, historians such Bahru Zewde called them the pioneers of change (but Messay Kebede disapproved of their Eurocentric tendencies).²⁷⁸ While Bahru sees them as the forerunners of change and transformation, De Lorenzi describes them not only as agents of change but also as changing the historiography, thus contributing to the preservation of the age-old tradition of writing history. For De Lorenzi, through these intellectuals “[v]ernacular historical writing was not Westernized; instead, Western historiography was indigenized”.²⁷⁹ For Bahru, and Täfäri (the future Haylä Şəllase) these intellectuals “battled with the forces of tradition to introduce political and economic reform”.²⁸⁰ All these scholars underlined the authoritative role of the intellectuals as crusaders for modernity against tradition, which was transformed but guarded for De Lorenzi, liquidated and transformed positively for Bahru and decentered for Messay.

The intellectuals, who were the emperor's men, recruited as part of the project of *şəltane* and *ləmat*, were not “pioneers of change” since change and the quest for social transformation was at least as old as the age of *Fəkkare Iyäsus*. Nor were they exclusive

278 Messay, *Survival and Modernization*, p.268.

279 De Lorenzi, *Guardians of the Tradition*.

280 Bahru Zewde, *The Quest for Socialist Ethiopia: Ethiopian Student Movement c.1960–1974* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2014), p.35.

“guardians of the tradition” since they were operating in a broader dialogue of civilization and development. Neither were they a Eurocentric force, for the same reason that the historical process was negotiated and articulated between the local and global dynamics in which centering and decentering had no historical relevance. The intellectuals were part of the speaking and creative subjects rather than pioneers or guardians in a wider pervasive discursive history of developmentalism in Ethiopia. As a result, they were instrumental in the pedagogic presentation of *śāḥṭane* and *lāmat* in different academic language and multiple genres. Their role can be described as by a vernacularization process in which instead of translating the global into the local they stood between the popular and the hegemonic state discourse, to articulate and translate the popular into the political. This major role can best be captured by the notion of the vernacular translating and articulating the popular into the political.²⁸¹ It is this pedagogic role of the Western-educated intellectual like Gäbrä Həywät Baykādañ that forces us to pay attention to the creative subject—but without homogenizing the sites he speaks from as historian, adviser, implementer, returnee, officer, and so on, compared to the local “homespun”²⁸² intellectuals educated mainly in indigenous institutions such as the church and mosque. What is at stake here is the new discursive site from which these intellectuals speak that added to the proliferation of the discourse of *śāḥṭane* and new forms of power relations between them and the upcoming prophet of civilization, indigenous scholars, nobilities and the masses in general. It is this politics that I intend to narrate here taking Gäbrä Həywät’s and Täklä Hawaryat’s works as examples. It is an attempt to depict how the discourse of civilization was politicized and created multiple sites, from which the subject debated, was about social transformation, the agent of the transformation and the imagined utopia.

281 Grant Farred, *What’s My Name?*.

282 Peterson, Derek and Giacomo Macula. “Introduction: Homespun Historiography and the Academic Profession”. In *Recasting the Past: History Writing and Political Work in Modern Africa* edited by Derek Peterson and Giacomo Macula (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009).

The Concept of *Ləmat*: Towards the Kingdom of Wealth and Knowledge

In writing the two books, Gäbrä Həywät did not use the notion of *śāltāne*. The concept had not yet emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century. He used *səltanā* to mean training. He also used the notion of *śərat*, to refer to law and order which he considered key to the power of any society. Like the emperor Tewodros, Gäbrä Həywät said that a society without *śərat* is powerless. “It is not the number of armies that makes might,” he wrote, adding that “a small city with law is much better than a big state with no *śərat*”. When he operationalized the term in relation to an army, the concept of *śərat* connoted discipline. The concept of *ləmat* is the most pervasive term in his works, standing for what he called the production of wealth and knowledge.

The concept of *ləmat* originates from the Ge’ez word *läma* and Amharic word *läma* and connotes to become fertile, or to flourish or grow in the earth and nature; to become beautiful or glow in appearance.²⁸³ Similarly, the Amharic term *Maləmat* connotes shine and sparkle, to improve, bloom, enrich or enhance. Gäbrä Həywät used *ləmat* to refer to enhancement and improvement in general, to processual progress, development or civilization. He used the term *ṭəfat* to mean to perish, decay and fall into ruin, as opposite to *ləmat*.

Such conceptualization bears a striking similarity to the prominent thirteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldun’s Arabic term *umran* to mean flourish, activity, bustling life, fullness, prosperity, and its opposite—to decline.²⁸⁴ As *Umran* was translated into civilization and culture, eventually *ləmat* was used for the development of the state and its national planning. Though the planning and other categories added to its semantic change, the politics and process of *translation* connotes negotiation rather than displacement to the extent that “it allows the incorporation of that which remains untranslatable.”²⁸⁵ Gäbrä Həywät’s conceptualization was a manifestation of the ongoing debate that signifies neither

283 Kidanä Wäld, *Mäṣḥafä säwasəw*, p.588.

284 Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, p.64.

285 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p.86.

pioneering nor guardianship—the production and accumulation of wealth and knowledge is its defining component. Such production is possible, according to Gäbrä Həywät, when man struggles against nature and its predicaments. Nature, for Gäbrä Həywät, embraces all useful resources in its womb and mankind has been created to rule over it. The struggle of men, to use Karl Marx's words, is labour, “a process in which both man and nature participate” to the eventual transformation of both.²⁸⁶

In this theoretical paradigm, as Gäbrä Həywät argues, in the same way that men are created equal, every society has an equal chance of progress. There is only one universal way of *ləmat*. Gäbrä Həywät's consideration of the equality of humanity and society is very insightful in the first decade of the twentieth century, when social Darwinism and Hegelian Eurocentrism were used for the justification of colonialism. In this light, Messay Kebede's criticism of Gäbrä Həywät's decentering of Ethiopia appears less plausible. By exposing the conceptual framework employed by Gäbrä Həywät as a Eurocentric misreading of the history of Ethiopia, Messay attempted to destabilize and refute Gäbrä Həywät's thesis, stating that in using materialist and Eurocentric and/or Hegelian and Marxist philosophy of evolutionary history as a template to analyze the Ethiopian past, Gäbrä Həywät had lost the true picture of Ethiopian history and could not read Africans pursuing goals as other than the “mastery of nature”.

The singularity of Gäbrä Həywät's theory of *ləmat* lies in his material explanation, mainly of the relationship between man and nature. He was perhaps influenced by the dominant discourse of Marxism during his time in Europe but presented it in a simplified language elaborated with biblical quotes. Gäbrä Həywät argued that man was a *barya* or subject of nature first and eventually became *geta* after acquiring knowledge. Man is not born *geta*, lord or servant; lordship and servitude is a product of knowledge.

It is this knowledge that made men cooperate and unite for the eventual mastery over nature, the singular way towards wealth, prosperity and the safety of men on earth. Mankind's struggle against

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²⁸⁶ Marx, *Capital*, p.115.

natural predicaments in the *longue durée* is the only way for *lāmat*, the kingdom of wealth and knowledge, to be realized. Like *Fəkkare Iyyäsus*, Gäbrä Həywät also gave attention to the times of trial and tribulation in Ethiopia, in the concept of *ṭəfat* or decay.

Extended State Formation Process as a Cause of the Destruction of Wealth and Knowledge

After a panoramic view of the history of the Ethiopian state, Gäbrä Həywät argued that war was the main explanation for Ethiopia's lack of wealth and knowledge. He associated war with an extended state formation process. The extent of war every society faces explains the difference among societies in the size, pace and content of *lāmat*. Appearing very Hobbesian, Gäbrä Həywät, argued that the state is needed because man selfishly wants to conquer others. Although state formation agreed with the Marxian explanation,²⁸⁷ according to the logic of conquest by those who preferred to survive by extraction, the state at a later stage was needed to oversee this conflict of interest emanating from the self-interest of each man. The role of the state was to pacify this will to conquer others, the same logic that explains its own formation and reproduction. War was first a product of the inclination of some who made a livelihood of looting and plundering peasants. These individuals organized under a leader whose production process dictated less organized peasants and dispersed settlement patterns. The organized group, or a differentiated class—to use the Marxist framework—served as the embryonic form of political rule over the peasants, conducting wars against other societies that were differentiated by religion. In Gäbrä Həywät's verbalization, the ruling elite were separated from the masses by the will and the power to live by conquest and extraction as well as the ability to organize—whereas the masses, surviving by labour and struggling with nature, were often dispersed and disorganized.

It was this material-religion nexus that wrote the *lāmat-ṭəfa*, the development-decay process, in the annals of human history. Gäbrä

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287 Gailey and Patterson, *Power Relations*.

Həywät called the economic formation or the production of wealth and knowledge in civil society it *ləmat*, and its reversal process *tafat* or the great destruction, a product of war. The formation of the political kingdom was therefore linked dialectically to that of the kingdom of wealth and knowledge. Gäbrä Həywät did not assume any kind of “infinite perfectibility of mankind”, and “irresistible” will to improve along the historical empty time in his historicism of *ləmat-təfat*. Instead, he acknowledged the reversal process, the decay, the destruction and the rupture of the production of wealth and knowledge as a result of the state formation, which was presented in his work as a process rather than an event.

The processual state formation animated by new religious ideology caused the perpetual subjection of society for this extended political war. When the state formation settles, society tends to produce built environment, cultivate the land and liberate itself from nature, though it pays tribute to the political elites. Such economic formation benefited from relative peace and led to *ləmat*. The disappearance of the old and the emergence of a new religion of power again ignited war and renewed the political formation process, animating the “competing state formation”²⁸⁸ process, leaving the kingdom of wealth and knowledge at risk. Society tends to retreat from built to natural environment as a survival mechanism; this retreat indeed liberates society from perpetual war but it falls back on bondage to the mercy of nature. In other words, it causes *tafat*—the great destruction of the economic formation.

This reversal process in Gäbrä Həywät’s theorization explains the dialectical link between the political kingdom and the kingdom of wealth and knowledge. The self-regulated political act of retreat by society, paralleled with the history of state-making wars and the reversal process appears analagous to Karl Polanyi’s history of the double movement between society and market: “self-protections of society” with a self-regulated market economy.²⁸⁹ At the risk of writing history by analogy, Gäbrä Həywät’s theory of the reversal

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288 Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*.

289 Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

process between the political and the social can be seen as a pre-modern “double movement”. The history of the great transformation, for Polanyi, was written by the modern state and capitalist market, and society’s movement in defence of itself, whereas for Gäbrä Heywät the history of the great destruction is the renewal of the state formation process and the associated self-regulated attempt of society to avoid the wars.²⁹⁰

This great destruction did not however result in the absence of the political or the state. Rather, the effect was the destruction of wealth and knowledge that explains the material lag in Ethiopia in particular and Africa in general. The production of knowledge and wealth commenced once the state formation wars died down and the victorious group ensured hegemony, laying tribute and enslaving the vanquished. Tribute and slave production therefore remained at the centre of the reproduction of the pre-modern state in Ethiopia.

This evolutionary process is influenced by political stability. The two political conditions of state making and nation building would create an amicable circumstance for sustainable interactions between society and nature, crucial — according to Gäbrä Həywät — for *lāmat* or the production of wealth and knowledge. Though he underlined the fact that society precedes the state, the state is historical, unavoidable and inevitable owing to the objective human condition of selfishness and the tendency of conflict of interest that needed a regulator and an arbiter.

Gäbrä Həywät applied this theory of state formation as vital in explaining the material and wealth differences among nations. Nations able to finish the process speedily created time for peace and societal unity and opened up possibilities to accumulate wealth and increase knowledge. The entry of different religions to Ethiopian polity at different times had burdened the region with new ideological justifications for dominance and made the formation of state a very long process. To read Gäbrä Heywät’s history through Ibn Khaldun’s theory: there was a constant making and unmaking of “group feeling” in the region that renewed the state formation process.

290 Op. cit., p.136.

The ideological role of religion, and the material motives of groups, were the two elements that explain the state formation wars in Ethiopia which lasted for centuries, negatively affecting the will to accumulate wealth and increase knowledge—and the struggle to break the ties to the mercy of nature. In the long historical times when the people of Ethiopia tamed nature and accumulated wealth and knowledge, the war and conflict sent history backwards, people leaving the tamed land and going to mountains as protection from the wars. The tamed land became wild again: and this was the great distraction by which Gäbrä Həywät explained the times of trial and tribulation, *Fəkkare Iyyäsus*. When relative peace was restored, people settled back, set history forward, tamed the land and accumulated wealth and knowledge signifying *ləmat*, advancement and progress. However, with the introduction of religion war started again and returned society to the wilderness.

Like Afäwärq Gäbrä Iyyäsu, who underlined religion in the centuries of war in Ethiopian history in his novel *Ṭobyä*, Gäbrä Həywät accentuated the role of the indigenous polytheistic religions and the three new religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) in re-initiating the state formation process. Religious rivalries between the followers of these religions were the norm. The long wars were the major cause of Ethiopia's not advancing in knowledge and wealth, or *ləmat*. The long wars also contributed to the division of labour, the majority of the population aspiring to the celebrated profession of warfare instead of peasantry, craft or business.

Gäbrä Həywät brought the material and cultural theory of state formation together to explain the pre-modern state formation process in the *longue durée* and its implications for development-decay dialectics. Such an account of Gäbrä Həywät fits with Samir Amin's call for explanation of the material difference between Europe and the rest of the world without falling into historical culturalism or historical materialism. Gäbrä Həywät explained Ethiopia's slow progress in *ləmat* or wealth and knowledge production. After his theoretical and historical diagnosis, Gäbrä Həywät recommended that the prince and other rulers of Ethiopia implement state developmentalism to attain the kingdom of wealth and knowledge,

to supplement and sustain the political kingdom of Ethiopia within the global colonial order.

State Developmentalism

According to Gäbrä Həywät, a society may develop or perish only by its will. It is the society at large that determines the condition of its *ləmat*. The will of a society is manifest in the state which, through its laws and its functions, elevates the people's level of knowledge and wealth (*ləmat*). It could be argued that this developmentalist feature of the state is, and has always been, common to all societies. Gäbrä Həywät visualized the state as having played this role in history. According to him, to govern society means to protect and preserve the existing gains of the people and to introduce the new. The people may not welcome the new, in which case the state should use force to introduce it as a function of its historical role of social regulation. Such forceful intervention to civilize, and such patronizing intervention, has been key to an understanding of Ethiopian developmentalism.

In its regulatory role the state should pacify and harmonize conflicting interests within society. Gäbrä Həywät prescribed that the state should stand beyond societal divisions in order to serve all equally: “to favour a particular national group or a few individuals is not commendable” were his words. Hence, Gäbrä Həywät's state is similar to that of Hobbes's Leviathan or Hegel's state, with “substantial will” possessing self-consciousness and rationality “in and of itself”, separate from individual and other forms of group formations and interests within society.

If a state wishes to improve the life of the *zega*, it has to facilitate the maximization of the people's wealth. Gäbrä Həywät reproduced the dominant discourse of the time: that the state should exercise pastoral power to ensure well-being in society—but he appears sceptical of a salvationist role for the state, arguing that religion belongs to conscience, that the supernatural king rules over it and the earthly king does not inspect it. In elaborating on this, he quoted from the Christian bible: give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give to God what belongs to God”. This enunciation later influenced

Ḥaylā-Sellasé's policy of de-politicizing religion as a reaction to the Italian divide and rule policy.

The pastoral or the developmentalist state of Gäbrä Ḥəywät is also responsible for the production of knowledge in society. Gäbrä Ḥəywät was a strong advocate of Ethiopian education being supplemented from Europe (he denigrated the Egyptian teachers at the Mənilək school in Addis Ababa, saying that they themselves needed a teacher). Technical and foreign languages should to be taught by Europeans; History, Law and Amharic by Ethiopian teachers. Like his analysis of theory and empirical material, Gäbrä-Ḥəywät's prescriptions were also the product of negotiation between local and global, domestic, and foreign.

The formation of the kingdom of wealth and knowledge of Gäbrä Ḥəywät was already part of the enunciation of *śarat*, or *ləmat*, at least since *Fəkkare Iyyäsus* had become the ethos of the state in the previous century. This ideology had become pervasive to the extent that everyone perpetuated self-subjection and submission to it. It also produced its civilizational other that included the clergy and the nobility. As in Tewodros's time, the clergy and what is historically known as the traditional nobility were the civilizational other yet to be captured, enlightened and disciplined by the transformational prince.

Gäbrä Ḥəywät's prescription emphasized that distributing land to the peasantry and conquering both the nobility and the clergy is essential for the project of wealth and knowledge. It is on this prescription, and ideological and political support to Täfäri, that historians such as Bahru addressed Gäbrä Ḥəywät and his contemporaries, as the pioneers of change against the forces of tradition. In Gäbrä Ḥəywät's thesis the state is not an entity completely dislocated from society. He argued that when the knowledge and wealth of people is maximized the strength and ideas of the state will expand. When the wealth and the intellect of the people grows, the state will have more power to implement its intentions. In this way, Gäbrä Ḥəywät described the dialectical link of state-society relations. It is not always a case of strong state-

weak society or vice versa,²⁹¹ similar to Antonio Gramsci called “the historical unity” and “organic relation between state, or political society and civil society.”²⁹² The choice for Gäbrä Həywät was either strong state and strong society or weak state and weak society. He evaded the duality of the state-society thesis, which dominated the study of the political in the third world later, in the second half of the twentieth century. Joel Migdal’s book *Strong society—Weak State*, in which he underlined the incapacity of states in Africa and other third world countries, serves as an example. Goran Hyden writes that “State does not lead society in Africa; and state does not control society. Societal values permeate state institutions in ways that are counterproductive to national development.”²⁹³ Hyden affirms Migdal’s thesis of strong societies and weak states as a defining element of the political in Africa.²⁹⁴

The strong state-strong society thesis of Gäbrä Heywät was not invoked to define exceptionalism in Ethiopian history alone. It is applicable to any society. The Ethiopian state was later considered an exceptional case by historians who upheld the theory of strong state-weak society in Africa. For example, Goran Hyden argued that only the Ethiopian state is suited to the application of Durkheim’s thesis of organized society—or a state developed as a response to the spontaneous division of labour or Marxian class analysis, owing to the development of the feudal relationship.²⁹⁵ For him, Ethiopia is the only country with a feudal and imperial pre-modern tradition of statehood that resisted colonialism and developed a distinct ruling class over the only peasantry on the continent—but experienced revolution and an exceptionally formalized politics of ethnicity post-1991. In short, for Hyden, the Ethiopian case illustrates the strong state-weak society thesis as an exception on the continent.

291 Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

292 Gramsci, *Prison Notebook*, p.202.

293 Goran Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.228–229.

294 Thandika Mkwandawire, “Thinking About Developmental States in Africa,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 2001, pp.289–313.

295 Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, p.61.

Gäbrä Heywät's strong state-strong society thesis underlined the organic linkage of the two, defying separation unless it was for analytical simplicity. It is in this organic link from which mutual benefit of state and society emanated and which Gäbrä Heywät prescribed as state developmentalism to transform Ethiopia. The state protects the people from bandits and thieves, and invokes *śarat* and law. The state should serve the people and the people should serve the state. When society prospers, the state is strong.

Such politico-ideological justification for the strong state on the continent later emerged in the aftermath of colonialism and led to the debate about socialist developmentalism in Africa. The socialist developmental state was also seen as the articulation of economic freedom in the second half of the twentieth century by nationalist leaders who mobilized their second revolution with the motto “search the economic kingdom then everything else will be unto you”, a derivative of Kwame Nkrumah's “seek ye first the political kingdom and all things shall be added unto you.”²⁹⁶ The second revolution of Kwame Nkrumah was economic kingdom through socialism and the dictum of Ujamaa, drawing from Maoist philosophy, was “Tanzania's long march is economic”.²⁹⁷ Placing Gäbrä Heywät's theory in this historical trend affirms that local and global conditions determined the African state to be pastoral, with a civilizational mission to ensure the well-being of society.

The Prophet of *Śaḷṭane* and “The Modern Prince”

Emperors Tewodros IV and Yoḥannēs IV used coercive power in the state-making project to the double effect of salvation and civilization. Gäbrä Heywät's transformative state or prince is different from the protagonist *Fəkkare Iyyāsus'* Tewodros to whom society professed to submit peacefully and agreed to live by his words. The developmentalist state of Gäbrä Heywät is coercive and a force against society in materializing social transformation and civilization—but without any mission of salvation. For Gäbrä

296 Biney, *The Political and Social Thought*, p.79.

297 Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism/Uhuru Na Ujamaa* (Dar Es Salaam: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1968).

Heywät, the emperor Mənilək II was far from being a modern prince who could build state developmentalism in Ethiopia. The effort made by Mənilək with regard to the production of knowledge was very parochial. Gäbrä Heywät perceived that an emperor relies on his advisers, local or foreign, for information, and that Mənilək's lack of knowledge of the world was caused by the colonial administration and a mistrustful relationship with his advisers. It took time for Mənilək to understand Europe and to realise that his people would suffer if they did not embrace European education.

Gäbrä Heywät considered the emperor Tewodros closer to the true agent of *śāṭane* and *ləmat* than Mənilək or the other Ethiopian emperors. It was Tewodros, according to Gäbrä Heywät, who united the divided Ethiopian state through the strength of his sword, attempting to liberate the *zega* from the yoke of the nobility and clergy. However, although the plans of Tewodros did not die with him they remained unimplemented. Although he found fault with texts such as *Fəkkare Iyyäsus*, Gäbrä Heywät, like other scholars, associated the emergence of the discourse of *śāṭane* with the personality of Tewodros. Acknowledging the foundational role of Tewodros, Gäbrä Heywät argued optimistically that the state of Tewodros had not died with the emperor, but would be renewed. The dream of Mənilək did not disappear, but the assignment was left to his successors, for whom Gäbrä Heywät wrote the prescriptive text. This agent of change, according to Gäbrä Heywät, would not be as well-loved as emperor Mənilək II and the people would not all submit to his rule. If we look at the history of the world, Gäbrä Heywät argued, it is clear that a king who establishes new *śərat* would not live in peace. He would be seen as the enemy of the people but would be praised posthumously for his deeds, for just as resistance to change is a defining element of any society, so Ethiopians resist transformational intervention.

Gäbrä Heywät exposed those historians who were not Gramscian organic intellectuals even though they emanated from the subaltern groups, or the *zega*. He considered that historiographical deliberation about the king while he is alive is impossible in Ethiopia and that freedom and liberty was yet to come to the Ethiopian subject. He favoured critical historiography that serves the masses, putting the

transformative emperor on the correct historical track and viewing the critical historian as a patriot who goes beyond merely praising the king to depict the mistakes of the state. The works of Gäbrä Heywät played a role comparable to that of *Fäkkare Iyyäsus* in its time.

The prophet of civilization, as is visible in Gäbrä Heywät's works, was a secularized agent of change. For him, the emperor as midwife of Ethiopia's civilization and development has no link with the metaphysical figure, does not need the assistance of devil or an angel and operates with neither prophesy nor curse. The secularized emperor is accountable for his wrongs and deeds and is the changemaker through his works. He locates history and politics down to the *polis* in the Aristotelian sense, to the physical realm rather than the Platonic metaphysical orientation of the historical analysis. According to Gäbrä-Heywät, the king, or the modern prince, is not a superhuman anointed and sent by a metaphysical figure like an ancient Ethiopian king of prophesy such as Tewodros of *Fäkkare Iyyäsus*; he is born from society to serve society, signifying the secularization of the articulation of civilization and development while keeping its theological form. The modern prince of Gäbrä Heywät is neither mythical like Tewodros nor a political party like a Gramscian modern prince, but a secular agent of change to centralize power, displacing the power of the nobility and the clergy, distributing land and declaring religious equality. In brief, for Gäbrä Heywät the modern prince, the modern prophet of civilization, is the constitutional monarch.

The fifth of the ten commandments the prince has to introduce in Ethiopian, as Gäbrä Heywät prescribes, is the constitution. A state without a written constitution (*śarat*, or *fätha nägäšt*) would have a short lifespan. The king, as the head, governs by law. Recalling and elaborating on European history, Gäbrä Heywät states that when the king dies his successors will take power according to the established *śarat*, or law. The state will continue: "the king is dead, long live the king", and he adds that a local saying, heard when the king has died is "we are the dead and we are the survivors ...".

Gäbrä Heywät's works exemplify articulated discourse, a combination of theoretical and logical analysis elaborated by

historical and empirical material. His conceptualization of the local involved translation, to vividly present the historical and theoretical analysis at the centre of his history of development and decay. His theory of state formation is an insightful construction without falling into any form of ethnocentrism, using comparative cases but historicizing the formation of state in Ethiopia. His articulation of Ethiopia's material backwardness is not explained through culturalism as was Messay Kebede's.²⁹⁸ He provides material cultural, social and political explanations without ghettoizing local history—although Elisabeth Wäldä-Giorgis has said that Gäbrä Heywät and his contemporaries were thinking from a “discursive field of alterity” in which culture is presented as blocking technology and development.²⁹⁹

Gäbrä Heywät's meticulous theorization, although not fully implemented, best represents Ethiopia's national project of *śāṭane* and *lāmat*, made not from a site exterior to the global colonial hegemonic discourse of progress but, rather, from within. The fissure and contingency allowed individuals and groups to play a role beyond that of a mere speaking subject without total submission to the rule of the discourse. The presence of a literary tradition simplifying the organization of power, the relatively successful anti-colonial war in 1896 and the legacy of a persistent state formation process animated by the four religions conditioned Ethiopian state /developmentalism and to locate local history in global human historicism. Although his work could be considered a revolution of the subaltern, it is implausible to condemn it for reproducing alterity and inverted Eurocentrism, or for de-centering Ethiopia by re-entering Europe. His work exemplifies a subaltern voice speaking from a place of global and local subjectivity as a call for a different form of subjectivity. The central tension in his work derives from his prescribing a strong state or a king who would intervene in society by force—the suggestion is of a constitutional monarchy. It was Täfäri, later Ḥaylā-Šəllase, who would take lessons from the advice that Gäbrä Heywät's oeuvre

298 Messay, *Survival and Modernization*.

299 Elizabeth Giorgis, “Charting Our Ethiopian Modernity and Modernism,” *Callaloo*, Volume 33, No. 1 (2010), pp.82–99.

best exemplifies. The immediate successor of Emperor Mənilək, Ləğ Iyasu, did not make use of Gäbrä Heywät's first text, *Aše Mənilək ena Ityopya*. Another Western-educated scholar wrote a simpler text, believing that discipline precedes enlightenment.

Behind the Fable of Discipline:

The Discourse of *śālṭane* and *ləmat*

One day at the end of 1913, the young prince Ləğ Iyasu and Täklä Hawaryat Täklä Maryam (one of the emperor's men and who had been educated in Russia and France) sat opposite each other, surrounded by palace attendants. Täklä Hawaryat, a reader and storyteller, and author in the royal storytelling programme, was reading aloud a fable that he had written.³⁰⁰ In the fable, a number of animal characters were given personified functions. From one episode to the next, the characters emerged and then disappeared. Each protagonist spoke for a while and was eventually silenced and displaced by a new protagonist in the next episode. The fable comprized numerous fragmented short poems serving as episodes. Some characters were presented as moral subjects and agents of civilization and development, while others were presented as immoral, lazy, unbelievers and sceptical of the theology of civilization and development—playful, fond of entertainment and less patriotic. At the end of each episode, they regretted their lack of serious purpose, and paid the price for their sceptism. Finally, the morally sound, the hard working, the patriots and the subjects of civilization were victorious and were rewarded.

Täklä Häwaryat recounted each episode of the fable to Ləğ Iyasu and his men, forming a triangular link between himself as narrator, the discourse represented through fragmented episodic fable and the object, the audience—the prince and his attending men.³⁰¹ Although this it resembled a royal entertainment gathering, the narrator was

300 Takälä Hawaryat Täklä Maryam, *Autobiography (Yä Heywoté Tarik)* Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1998, p.199.

301 For elements of a fable and its distinctive narrative form, compared to fiction, see Michel Foucault, "Behind the Fable," in *Essential Works*, vol. 2, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by J.D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998), pp.137–146.

not merely entertaining but was struggling to awaken the emperor to his civilizational mission. In the first half of the twentieth century, everyone was considered either a subject of *śāltane* or as a cast-out, an aborigine waiting, subjugated, for the totalizing discourse and ethos of Ethiopian civilization. The struggle between these different forces produced, signified and represented by the discourse, animated the fable. “Bodyless voices jostle each other to recount the fable,” as Michel Foucault fascinatingly described in *Behind the Fable*.³⁰² Such discourse, and the forces it created, represented and animated—the recounting of history, the performances of theatre, the rehearsal of poetry—were all conditioned by non-discursive historical events, institutions and constructions of things done in the name of the same discourse.

The first fable presents ant and grasshopper as protagonists. The ant has worked hard in the summer season while the grasshopper was singing and dancing. When winter comes, the ant survives on what it has harvested during the summer and the grasshopper begs food from the ant, which is refused on account of the grasshopper’s playful character during the summer. At the end, the writer advises the children of Ethiopia to learn from the ant:

Listen carefully to the story of the ant
 Never reward the playfulness of the lazy
 Unless he has worked, don’t pay the lazy
 Diligent one, pursue knowledge
 Never deny him the value of his labour. [my
 translation]

Through the character of the frisky grasshopper, Täklä Hawaryat lauded the ant’s hard work and condemned the playfulness and idleness he observed in the everyday life of the prince and the individuals who accompanied him. He advised the prince to be awake, like the ant. It was this voice behind the fable, sceptical of the prince’s role as prophet of Ethiopian civilization, that challenged the prince and his attendants’ lack of historical consciousness.

The prince and his nobles were laughing, giving each other

302 Foucault, “Behind the Fable,” p.139.

playful punches and wrestling while Täklä Hawaryat was narrating the fable. They were perhaps focused on the personification of the ant and the grasshopper and had missed the hidden voices. One of the attendants was Nägadräs Täsämma, head of the customs office, known for his poetic and artistic gifts and a pioneer in recording his voice on the gramophone. Although he chose to play with the prince and his group at the time, he could instead have used his skills from the *Säm ena Wärq*, Gold and Wax of the Ethiopian poetic complex, to make sense of the voice behind the fable. Wax and Gold poetry had two meanings: the wax signified the superficial while the gold represented the meaning hidden below the surface.

Täklä Hawaryat continued with the next fable, about a monkey that cynically, looking into a mirror, observed its own image as if it was the face of something else. The fable ends with an intervention by the writer presenting the moral lesson satirically:

Why I do tell a story about the monkey,

Would there be any creature that belittles its look?

In this moral lesson, Täklä Hawaryat used the monkey to tell the prince to look at his own image, his own purpose and his historical mission. While *Ləḡ Iyasu* and his fellows were again giggling, pushing and punching one other playfully, Täklä Hawaryat continued with the third fable, about an ignorant cockerel which found a valuable pearl but left it because it was not a pea. The lesson was that knowledge determines the value of things:

Wish to get knowledge, before anything else

Since it is knowledge that precedes discovery.

Täklä Hawaryat gave animals anthropocentric characteristics to awaken and enlighten *Ləḡ Iyasu*. In his manuscript, there are numerous poetic fables ending with a moral lesson, each connected to the discourse of civilization. For example, one of the fables tells of the conflict within the anatomy of a human being, involving tongue, legs, hands and stomach. The stomach metaphorically represented the ruler or the state, while the rest were slaves, tribute payers and the *zega*. At the conflict, all stopped work in protest, complaining of the idle lifestyle of the stomach while others were labouring. At the end, when they were all weakened by death, they reconciled, to fill the

belly so that all could survive. Then Täklä Hawaryat presented a long moral lesson about serving the state diligently, in the way that legs carry and serve the stomach. With historical narratives he showed how the state of Ethiopia had survived for centuries, and called upon the youth to build a strong state through loyal and diligent service:

State and society are like one entity
 If they don't support each other, all would collapse
 together.
 Children of our country, let you understand this
 If you don't learn hard now, when you are a child
 If you are not committed and devoted to serve
 The state of *Habaša*, your collective home
 The people, the state, the country and all of us
 together
 We will perish and even the coming generation
 of ours
 Will inherit our legacy, a legacy of humiliation
 Shackles and chains that we would leave behind,
 For inevitable subjection, under a foreign
 conqueror.

In this fable, Täklä Hawaryat presented the unity of society as theorized by Gäbrä Həywät. He also told of the colonizing of Africa. "Civilize or perish", survival in the context of colonialism, was the predominant narrative. Unless Ethiopia civilized itself, it would be vulnerable to colonial forces. Täklä Hawaryat had written the fable to re-align the prince who had lost his purpose and his historical consciousness:

Mənilək laid the foundation but got sick or died without the completion of Ethiopia's civilization (*səltane*) ... How can we remain silent when Iyasu lost track? Is it the destiny of Ethiopia? Is this not the destruction of Ethiopia? The whites are waiting surrounding Ethiopia! How can Ethiopia skip such danger of colonialism? ... This youth must be set back on track otherwise our country will perish ... First it is necessary to capture his conscience, and then his mind will be

cultivated easily. To this effect, I wrote the fable entitled *Yä Awrewoč Tärät* following the example of Aesop, La Fontaine and Kirloo.

After Täklä Hawaryat had finished reading, *Ləj* Iyasu continued playfully wrestling with his men. The prince received the fable facetiously and told Täklä Hawaryat to read it to his father, King Mikael, who was amused by the personification of the animals. Täklä Hawaryat had to explain that he had written the fable to entertain *Ləğ* Iyasu in a way that awakened him to serious matters.

Although the fable was animated by the urge to civilize and develop Ethiopia, the prince and his attendants chose to see only the literary drama: the personification of animals, and the anthropomorphism of the protagonist. They saw (or were willing to see) only the wax, the surface meaning, and not the gold, the underlying political intention. The prince left the gathering unconvinced and refusing to be influenced. In the view of Täklä Hawaryat, *Ləj* Iyasu was a true civilizational and developmental other, yet to be baptized and disciplined.

The fable represents the evolution of the discourse of civilization in the first half of the twentieth century, in which differing factions were objectified and othered. Such discourse was deployed in every political act: in the establishing of an institution, the writing of a book or the publication of a newspaper. It was contained in the conducting of a coup d'état or the promulgation of a constitution—even in conducting a royal trip to Europe and entry into the League of Nations. Historical events, institutions and infrastructures, all non-discursive history—all were in the name of civilization and development. Those who resisted were othered as archaic and the forces of tradition whose baptism to *səltane* had been delayed. Although otherness is persistent and the discourse and enunciation is regular, the “ship of fools” had no permanent crew and passengers. Its imagined hospital of the other, or the prison of the excluded, had no regular objectified subject. Everyone, the prince, the *zega*, the nobility and the educated elite emerged as a candidate for otherness at one time or another, with the eventual disappearance of the *bareya*, the pre-modern civilizational other.

In 1918 one army, *māhal sāfari*, conducted a public rally, protesting against the first ministerial council which had been established by Emperor Mənilək II in 1907, an institution which heralded the beginning of modern politics in Ethiopia. Most of the ministers were what Gäbrä Ēgziabəher Elias called the patriots of *śəltane*, who followed the prophet of *śəltane*, Emperor Mənilək, in climbing the mountain of civilization.³⁰³ In a letter, the *māhal sāfari* stated that the ministers were not committed to *śəltane* and did not play a role in it except in accumulating wealth for themselves. They quoted the old oath that had been used to tie the captives to their master or the elite army to the emperor: “We your *barya* will shed our blood and die before you”.³⁰⁴ The involvement of this army in the politics of civilization and development points to the contemporariness of what are categorized as the pre-modern and the modern. This was the last time that *māhal sāfari*, a special army of the palace and the last legacy of the pre-modern army of the *cāwa*, was involved in the political —before dissolving into modern institutions. They were now deploying the speech of *śəltane* and development to exclude the ministers who had been praised as the patriots of *śəltane*. Like the episodes of the fable, the otherness and objectifying process involved the disappearance of one subject, leading to the emergence of a new subject in the discursive history of *śəltane* in twentieth-century Ethiopia. Ləj Iyasu neither utilized the first book of Gäbrä Həywät nor listened to the persistent attempts and advice of Täklä Hawaryat. In Bahru Zewde’s words, “the charges of apostasy levelled against Iyasu ... clung to him for a long time, and his playboy manners and inordinate sexual appetites filled the history books”.³⁰⁵ Although history belongs to the victor, an alternative interpretation of Iyasu’s life represents him as liking an ordinary lifestyle despite being a prince. He attempted to create national unity by responding positively to religious and ethnic differences. Some historians such as Bahru Zewde view Iyasu’s attempt to solve national integration as more progressive than that of the revolutionary emperors Tewodros

303 Gäbrä-Egziabher, *Yä Tarik Mastawäsha*.

304 Märsé Häzän, *Yä hayagññaw Kefelä Zämän Mäbacha*, p.213.

305 Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p.121.

and Yoḥannəs IV, or even that of Emperor Mənilək II. It was Täfäri Mäkwännən, who Bahru Zewde called “the progressive prince”, who exploited every opportunity in his ascendancy to absolute power—all historical opportunities including the prescription of the intellectuals and the political support of the nobility, liquidating those who challenged him. Only later did he become the true prophet of *śəltāne* and *ləmat*. Those who had appropriated the ethos and discourse of the modern state were able to consolidate their power while those reluctant to embrace pervasive discourse lost theirs. This was the difference between prince Iyasu and Täfäri, who became Ḥaylā Selassie I, king of kings, emperor of modern Ethiopia, in 1930.

Discursive Community of *Śāləṭane*: Ethnography of the Newspaper *Bərhanənnā Sālam*

IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY Ethiopia, the discourse of *śāləṭane* invaded everything. It became a fable, and also a historical text narrating the past, present and future of Ethiopia under its shadow. As concept, ethos and language of consolidating state developmentalism, *śāləṭane* represented the creative power of Ethiopian economic nationalism. This powerful concept and the dialogue it generated coalesced in the *Bərhanənnā Sālam* newspaper, attracting writers and readers. It was meant to educate and inform the *zega* whose citizenship was gradually recognized through their subjugation to the emperor's project of civilization.

Bərhanənnā Sālam represented both discourse and a thing, a material entity. It was a site witnessing, describing and prescribing, like *Fəkkare Iyāsus*, the progress of Ethiopia, the realization of the rebuilding of the church and the reconstruction of the city. The progressive prince Täfäri Mäkönnən presented himself as the prophet of *śāləṭane*, and inaugurated *Bərhanənnā Sālam* for this noble purpose. *Bərhanənnā Sālam* was expected to serve “the development of our country, benefit of our people, and [to] strengthen our state” (26 March 1925).³⁰⁶ Like other print media, and books such as those of Gäbrä Həywät and the fables of Täklä Hawaryat, it was set “to guide, advise, awaken and strengthen the mind of the people ‘towards *śāləṭane*’” (1 January 1925). It became the new *Fekkaré Iyāsus* in

306 Dates in brackets represent the issue of the newspaper in which the words or ideas appeared.

its genre and its time-frame, which considered the future of its protagonists and historical subjects to determine how the history of Ethiopia would play out.

The historical subjects were the emperor, a prophet of *šālātane*, the nobles and many others, emperor's men as disciples of *šālātane*. The masses or *zega* were the receivers of *šālātane*. In *Bārhanānna Šālam*, all of them became part of a discursive community connected through *šālātane*. The idea of publishing a newspaper for advocating *šālātane* came from the renowned homespun historian and director of one of the earliest state publishing houses in the country, Gäbrä Kərstos Täklä Haymanot. Another homespun intellectual and author, Märsəce Həzān Wäldä Qirqos, was the first editor of the newspaper.

As a material representation *Bārhanānna Šālam* was like a temple of *šālātane*. It allowed many to speak through it about civilization and salvation. *Bārhanānna Šālam* itself signified, like other temples, the proximity of the enlightened utopia. As a temple of *šālātane*, *Bārhanānna Šālam* became a fetish, considered both a means to and the end of Ethiopian *šālātane*. Like the print technology and its product of affordable books, the newspaper appeared in what Benedict Anderson described, “print-as-commodity,”³⁰⁷ a non-discursive thing that conditioned the evolution of *šālātane*. It did not merely signify the discourse. Rather, it became *šālātane* itself.

One of the effects of this newspaper-as-commodity or temple of civilization was that it objectivized thinking, reading and writing subjects. It created its disciples and believers or, in Anderson's language a community, but not necessarily an imagined community. Rather, it created a community of subjects through the pervasive discourse of *šālātane*.

Bārhanānna Šālam belonged to its writers and readers, which included both the elite and the public. It was not a site exclusively for Western-educated intellectuals or elites to deliberate about *šālātane* but was meant for anyone with a story to tell about *šālātane*. The public was the author of the newspaper—individuals from different walks of life such as secretaries, telephone technicians, civil servants,

307 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p.56.

businesspersons, priests, students and former slaves. Acknowledging this, a dedicated writer and reader, or subject of *śaləṭane*, wrote in *Bərhanənnā Sālam* (9 September 1926): “In the past, the poor [person] needed to cut a stone and carry a [suitcase]. Nobody would consider an idea of a poor [man], neither the love of his country nor his feeling for government.” *Bərhanənnā Sālam* was a relatively widely distributed and read in Addis Ababa and other towns (the extent of distribution was limited to those who could read Amharic). People wrote from cities and towns such as Asmara, Mekele, Adwa, Jimma, Harar, Dire Dawa, Däse, Gondar and Chiro (Aassbä Täfäri). Many who travelled abroad for education wrote about their experiences in Europe and made suggestions for Ethiopia’s progress—Europe and Japan were geopolitical spaces much written about. The geographies and sociology of *Bərhanənnā Sālam*’s usage and distribution were complex and varied. *Bərhanənnā Sālam*’s content contributed to informing its community about the world and allowed them to imagine Ethiopia in this global space.

The newspaper was not only a site of confrontation between Western-educated and homespun intellectuals. Historians often call the former “*Bərhanənnā Sālam* scholars or intellectuals”³⁰⁸ and they present *Bərhanənnā Sālam* as the exclusive site of the Western-educated.³⁰⁹ Some considered the newspaper’s space to be hierarchical. It is dubious, however, to label all the writers as intellectuals, or the newspaper an intellectual site. The term “*Bərhanənnā Sālam* intellectuals” would be a misnomer unless understood as an inclusive term referring to commoners writing about education, infrastructure construction, behavioural change, business and trade, religion—and the secular world in general.

Bərhanənnā Sālam was the manifestation of the closeness of utopia; its agent Täfäri Mäkwännən used it to mobilize, teach and enlighten the people towards achieving this national vision. As James de Lorenzi put it, *Bərhanənnā Sālam* was “the institutional embodiment of Täfäri Mäkwännən’s program of state state-led education and administrative reform”. In *Bərhanənnā Sālam*, De Lorenzi wrote,

308 Giorgis, “Charting our Ethiopian Modernity”.

309 Bahru, *Pioneers of Change*.

there “... was an intense collective focus on national emancipation and revitalization”, and “National modernization, they [writers] believed, was the key to preserving Ethiopia’s political sovereignty”.³¹⁰

The role of *Bārhanānna Šālam* and other print products in popularizing national developmentalism was decisive. It was a space where one could also read “the poetics of Ethiopian modernity.”³¹¹ The politics of national developmentalism was unfolding within the geopolitics of the inter-war period, making the *Bārhanānna Šālam* community both anti-colonial and developmentalist, although there was no direct conversation with the transnational anti-colonial movements of the time.³¹²

Bārhanānna Šālam contributed to the proliferation of debate and the production of subjects as believers in the theological discourse of *šālāṭāne*. The subjectivity of the *zega* to the discourse of civilisation, or the way they were made to see themselves as subjects of civilization, signified their citizenship: *zega* were invited to take part in the civilization projects, and others, by writing in *Bārhanānna Šālam*, a site where the rebuilding of the church and of the city were debated and praised, often on the front page (it is worth noting that the intellectual bent of the first editor, Mārsāce Ḥazān, was that of the Ethiopian Orthodox church). The key role of religious education and religiosity in the history of creative ideas such as *šālāṭāne* was comparable with the ideas imported by Western-educated intellectuals.

By writing in the *Bārhanānna Šālam*, the *zega* acknowledged its own self-subjection and baptism to the religiosity of *šālāṭāne* and *lāmat*, and at the same time took part in the objectification of other *zega*, or the nobility. The commoners were thinking and creative subjects contributing to the translation of global concerns to the local context, using local concepts and languages, reflecting and speaking to local sensibilities. It is this translation, reconceptualization,

310 De Lorenzi, *Guardians of the Tradition*, p.43

311 Giorgis, “Charting our Ethiopian Modernity”.

312 Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World c. 1850–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.240.

adoption and adaption, articulation and negotiation that allow us to appreciate the agency of the creative subject under the totalizing shadow. It is this form of politics that *Bərhanənnā Sālam* makes intelligible to us.

Bərhanənnā Sālam was *səlṭan* space of religiosity where preachers and believers met. It served as a pulpit. The negotiated discourse of *śəlṭane* was the preacher behind the pulpit, like the drama behind the fable. Its voices narrated the political contestation between local actors in national politics on one hand and the struggle between local and global forces (mainly colonial actors in the inter-war periods) on the other hand. *Śəlṭane*, as it emerged from different sites, from church and state institutions, from local and transnational sites, was a negotiated discourse and there was even debate between the emperor and his men. A notable example is the difference in the 1910s between Prince Täfäri and Ras Hailu of Gojjam, on what Ethiopia needed from Europe,³¹³ and between Ras Kassa and educated emperor's men such as Wäldä Giyorigos Wäldä Yohannis and Mäkwonnən Habtäwäld in the 1940s about the road to *śəlṭane* and *ləmat*.³¹⁴

Like the protagonist in the fable, the preacher who was the subject of *śəlṭane* was not always constant. One subject emerged and played the speaking role, objectifying others, till its displacement and disappearance, leaving the stage for the next subject. Sometimes, the *zega* became a subject objectifying the prophet, or the emperor's men, or the nobles who were considered patriots of *śəlṭane*. At another time, Western-educated emperor's men objectifying the *zega* or the nobility praised the emperor as saviour and baptizer. This dominant discourse animated the writing, publication, distribution and reading of *Bərhanənnā Sālam*. The pattern of objectification did not always follow a pattern of the formal structure of politics with the emperor (as subject), the nobility and educated elites (as mediator) and the *zega* (as object) of the Ethiopian state and its ethos. At one time, the process of objectification would flow horizontally between elites or

313 Täklä Iyyāsus Wäqəjəra, *Yä ItəyoṢaya Täräk*.

314 Zäwdé Rata *Yä Qadamawi Ḥaylā-Səllasé* Mängest 1930–1955 (Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2005), pp.625–635.

commoners and at another time it proceeded vertically as a top-down or bottom-up approach.

The nobility, supposed to be patriots of *šālāṭane*, were often reluctant patriots, and were sometimes civilizational others yet to be trained, awakened and enlightened. Prince Täfäri was presented as a new prophet of advancement who effortlessly worked to civilize the *zega*. Empress Zāwditu was also considered an agent of this civilizational project. Prince Täfäri expanded the temples of civilization, keeping the legacy of Mənilək II. He intensified this after he became Ḥaylā SəllaseI, king of kings of Ethiopia in 1930, until he was displaced into exile in 1936 when Italian forces entered the country heralding a new but short (1936–1940) episode in the history of progress and civilization in Ethiopia.

After reading ethnographically the hegemonic project of *šālāṭane*, the task here is to read *Bārhanānna Šālam* subversively, along and against the grain, to excavate the voices of political subjects and to show the role of individuals from different walks of life contributing to the development of the discourse of *šālāṭane*.

Debating the Concept of *Šālāṭane*

The meaning of *šālāṭane* and *ləmat* was one of the major debates conducted through *Bārhanānna Šālam*, although *Šālāṭane* or *ləmat* had different origins. In the first half of the twentieth century they became synonymous and appeared together as twin perceptions inseparable in articulating the concepts of civilization, development, improvement and progress in Ethiopia. The term *šālāṭane* sometimes translated into development—for example, the phrase “for the civilization of the people” in Täfäri’s speech was translated as “*Pour le développement*”..³¹⁵ Most scholars inaccurately present a chronological succession between *šālāṭane* and *ləmat* comparable to the English terms civilization and development. The survival of the term *šālāṭane* till the 1960s as a dominant concept would seem to expect an instant replacement by the term by *ləmat*, which later translated as development in the sense of the term following the

315 Prince Täfäri Mäkönnən’s speech at inaugural ceremony of the Täfäri Mäkönnən School, *Bārhanānna Šālam*, 7 May 1925.

Second World War.³¹⁶ However, *ləmat* was older than the term *śələṭane*, an invented concept of the early twentieth century.

In the predominant public conversation in *Bərhanənnā Sālam*, the conceptualization of *śələṭane* fluctuated between the bifurcated discourses of spiritual and profane, household and state, individual and collective, private and public, moral and technological, old and new as well as Ethiopian and European *śələṭane*. All was anchored on the binary of rebuilding the church and rebuilding the city as a defining ethos of the modern state since the nineteenth century. *Bərhanənnā Sālam* (in French *Lumière et Paix*) was the official name of the newspaper and elaborations on this name appeared in numerous opinion pieces representing the conceptual debate on *śələṭane* and *ləmat*.

The publication of a new newspaper, different from *A'emro*—which was started by Emperor Mənilək II, under Negus Täfäri—was suggested by Gäbrä Kərstos Täklä Haymanot, director of the publishing house. Naming the new newspaper also involved other scholars such as the renowned author and archivist Märsəce Həzən Wäldä Qirqos but the name was selected by the prince Täfäri himself.³¹⁷ All spoke the language of *śələṭane* and *ləmat* which led to the realisation of *Bərhanənnā Sālam* and the community it produced.

In the first edition of the newspaper, the term *bərhan*, an Amharic word meaning light, was given two metaphoric interpretations: light symbolizing both Christian and secular knowledge. Christianity and education were seen as conditions that led to the national utopia called *śələṭane*. From the beginning, many considered *śələṭane* as negotiated between the sacred and the profane, and Ethiopia was said to have already achieved the sacred *śələṭane*.

Bərhan and *ləmat* have a semantic similarity in which *ləmat* itself etymologically connotes *Bərhan* or light, signifying the imagined utopia that the discourse of *śələṭane* promises as a national vision of salvation and civilization. *Bərhan* denoted ideas such as success, betterment, improvement, wisdom and, in general, the emancipation of humankind

316 Bekele Shiferaw, "Introduction", in *Culture and Development in Ethiopia*, edited by Bekele Shiferaw (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2004).

317 Märsəce Həzən, *Yəhayaññaw kəflä zämān Mäbača*, p.275.

from natural and human predicaments including backwardness, ignorance, poverty, slavery and being colonised. It is deployed as a metaphorical expression of the ethos of the state, denoting *lāmat* in both salvational and civilizational senses. Light has been symbolized as a “people’s wing, which serves for movement in life. It is like a ... ship which transports us from one world to another in a big ocean” (2 April 1925). Both “wing” and “ship” are aspects of mobility and a journey, perhaps towards *šālātane*. Light itself is *šālātane*, a thing that takes us to a state of satisfaction, happiness, freedom and power over others. The means-end distinction appears confusing but whatever the means or the end, *bārhan* was considered as conquering space and distance and an instrument for solving a predicament.

Light and darkness symbolized the development-decay dialectic. The lack of something like education was both the explanation for and the manifestation of darkness or decay. Lack of elements such as education, industriousness, commerce, unity and harmony was used to explain Ethiopia’s material backwardness (9 April 1925). *Šālam*, or peace in the name of the newspaper, was a necessary condition to *šālātane*, as in the *Fəkkare Iyyäsus* and the works of Gäbrä Həywät (1 January 1925). War was identified as a major impediment to progress and *lāmat* (6 February 1925). Ethiopia remained poor “because of division and antagonistic relations” (2 April 1925). Civilization and freedom were impossible without unity and harmony between the state and society (9 April 1925). For many, national freedom could survive in the condition of conflict and lack of national unity which had exposed the nation to the colonialism that was considered as national slavery (5 April 1930). The discourse of *šālātane* continued as anti-colonial discourse, although it also encouraged a retrospective reading of the past to explain Ethiopia’s lack of material civilization through the absence of unity and peace.

Education as Temple of Civilization

One of the most celebrated institutions at the time was school education, called *yä šālātane temhrt-bet* or school of *šālātane*, a true gate or temple of *šālātane*. Education was seen as a tool for civilization, as was the case in Europe and in Japan. Education was

also seen as an anti-colonial tool to escape collective slavery. A writer remarked: “We shall choose freedom instead of *bəriyanät* [slavery] and knowledge instead of ignorance” (30 April 1925).

The school was considered the new place of *śələṭane*, alongside the church. One head of a school spoke of it as “a better worshipping place than the church because one can worship both religion and civilization in school” (12 December 1929). Local languages such as Ge’ez and Amharic were taught in addition to English and French. Most schools of the time were built adjacent to churches headed by religious leaders, and the curriculum mix between the local and the Western, at least at the beginning, is symbolic of the dialogue between salvation and civilization, sacred and profane, old and new *śələṭane* in Ethiopia.³¹⁸ The language and skills were considered foreign, whereas religion and local languages were components of the indigenous curriculum. Language was the most debated issue. The indigenous scholars criticized the Western-educated intellectuals for their knowledge of foreign languages which was thought of as indicating an intention to serve as a translator if Ethiopia were to be colonized. The Western-educated rejected the criticism, stressing the relevance of foreign languages to access *śələṭane*. Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyyäsus was one of those critical of Ge’ez, calling it useless for modern times — while the pro-Ge’ez writers saw it as the only way to access the *śələṭane* of the past. Many underlined the role played by the Ge’ez language and church education in Ethiopia’s anti-colonial struggle.

Some of the educated intellectuals did indeed become collaborators during the five-year Italian occupation period, as anticipated in 1925. A senior emperor’s man, Afäwärq, known for his advocacy of Ethiopia’s *śələṭane*, became the spokesperson for the fascist Italian government in Addis Ababa.³¹⁹ Later, in the 1950s, the pro-Ge’ez scholar Asräs Yäne säw depicted Ge’ez as a way to *śələṭane*.³²⁰ The debate continued and gradually the decision to adopt English as a medium of instruction was made, followed by the complete abandonment of local knowledge systems. Scholars call

318 See Bahru, *Pioneers of Change*.

319 Bahru, *Pioneers of Change*; Messay, *Survival and Modernization*.

320 Asräs, *Tebé Axum Mānu Antä?*

this process native colonialism; to them, the decolonial call meant the return and re-centring of the indigenous written tradition into the modern education system of the country.³²¹

The modern schools of the time were a compromise. Most of the writers, including the emperor, promoted education as the panacea for the material predicaments of the country. It was out of this vision that the emperor, as the champion of Ethiopia's *šālātane*, opened schools and, later, a university. The *Bērhanēnna Šālam* would regularly publicize the opening of new schools by the emperor and other elites figures, naming the individuals and the amounts of their contributions for the construction of the schools—this publicity was instrumental in the raising of funds. School and education were the major themes debated and recorded in *Bērhanēnna Šālam*, an indication that the content of the curriculum of the emerging Ethiopian education system was not yet decided. It was a mix of knowledge and skills, secular and sacred, Ethiopian and European. This continued until it was interrupted by the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1936.

Civilizing Eve in the World of Adam

The discourse of *šālātane* was also used to target women and their transformation. In the public realm, women, women's bodies and the civilisation of women was a necessary condition for Ethiopia's *šālātane*. Writers wrote advising women to change their manners and to go to school, to value education like European women (20 March 1930). Veiling and unveiling was a strongly debated issue—there was a repeated call for a woman to unveil in public, the European woman being the point of comparison. Condemning unveiling and short dresses, one writer argued that “to shorten clothes is to be mad” and “unveiling is not a sign of *šālātane*”, and even added that “to trust women is to allow Eve's mistake to reappear”. For some, however, unveiling was the beginning, and knowledge the destiny, of *šālātane* for Ethiopian women (22 July 1926). On education: “You [women] need to educate yourselves; uneducated women are not

321 See Yirga Gelaws Woldeyes, *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence Against Traditions in Ethiopia* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2017).

good for an educated man” (4 July 1926). Women were advised by male writers to reduce the number of their attendants in public, and even urged to conduct a pilgrimage to Europe, like that of Prince Täfäri, to understand the meaning of *śālātane* (17 October 1929).

In the hegemonic discourse of *śālātane* the woman was objectified. Women’s writing, debating, correcting and resisting the objectification and the otherness in *Bérhanénna Sälam* signifies their ambivalent position.

Nobles: Both the Multitude and Disciples of *Śālātane*

Because of their historical roles, nobles were defined as agents and political subjects of *śālātane*. Their political power, however, did not on its own make them leaders: they had to be active. Like women, the nobles were defined as objects of transformation. Once converted, they became junior partners of the emperor, to be the agents of *śālātane*.

Members of the *Berhanena Sälam* discursive community advised nobles to be true patriots of *śālātane* by promoting social transformation in their constituencies. A writer argued that “instead of accumulating wealth to their children who would eventually waste it, it is better for nobles to educate their children and build bridges in their name. It will serve as a memorial site to them” (9 September 1926). The nobles and political elite were one of the most objectified subjects in *Bérhanénna Sälam*, disparaged for not building schools, roads and bridges as temples of *śālātane* in their constituencies, encouraged by the public to make known their commitment to *śālātane*, to advertise their deeds and—as patriots of *śālātane*—to contribute to the deliberations in *Berhanena Sälam*. Because they did not write in the newspaper the nobles were considered the civilizational other, the force of tradition. In this narrative of alterity, the contempt of the Western-educated intellectuals for the nobles was highly visible. The invisible struggle between the elite slaves and the newcomer elites grew, and eventually became an open competition between the nobles and the emperor’s men.

Ethiopian Šālātane vs European Civilization

Christianity as a form of spiritual purity was an aspect of the official discourse of *šālātane* and *lāmat* in Ethiopia which, in the mainstream national narrative, was considered to be “islands of Christianity surrounded by Heathen Sea.”³²² A writer described the *šālātane* of Ethiopia and compared it with Europe: “To see God’s work, go to Ethiopia and to see man’s work, go to Europe ... dignity comes when wisdom flourishes in the country” (6 December 1930).

Spirituality was an element of indigenous civilization in the national discourse. At the time, the Ethiopian civilizational discourse was comparable to Indian nationalism, which defined itself by spiritual purity in the inner world, despite material backwardness in the outer world. Mahatma Gandhi had labelled Western civilization as godless. Similarly, in addition to preserving the spirituality and the renewal of the church, the Ethiopian civilizational discourse aspired to fill the gap through the quest for material advancement.³²³ The rebuilding of the church did not require foreign assistance, whereas the building of the city and the country itself demanded not only assistance but also emulation. The debate in *Bérhanēnna Šālam* considered the success of Japan, whose development within 60 years resulted from emulating Europe. This was a historical example that Ethiopia could replicate. A writer argued in *Bérhanēnna Šālam* that “it needs diligence and understanding of the value of European knowledge to civilize. The collective ability to see beyond the horizon made Japan a strong society” (*Berhanena Šālam*, 14 May 1925). The article advised readers that “if we follow the Japanese model and fill our ignorance and gaps we can ... maintain the age-old freedom and sovereignty of Ethiopia.” Scholars such as Gäbrä Heywät who promoted this idea were called Japanizers.

In addition to the spiritual *šālātane*, the discussion included the survival of the political and the *māngəšt* or the state as symbol of national freedom, seen against the material lag. The political

322 Tāfāri Mäkonnen’s speech. *Berhanena Šālam*, 7 May 1925.

323 Mrinalini Sinha discusses the Indian nationalist discourse on inner and spiritual worlds, the pure against the material world. See Mrinalini Sinha, “Introduction,” in *Gender and Nation*, (Washington, DC: American Historical Association, 2006).

development and formation was compared with underdevelopment. Explanations for the material lag and the discourse of prescription were always attached to the survival and further stability of the state. Political survival was considered as success but one writer commented that “The longest surviving state, Ethiopia, walks like a child” (7 April 1925), acknowledging the dynamics of political development and material decay—a comparative explanation that appears similar to the development and decay dialectics of Gäbrä Heywät.

A member of the *Berhanena Sālam* discursive community offered an explanation of Ethiopians’ national self-image: “worms in fruit do not know that there is light outside the fruit. They think that the fragmented light in the fruit is enough.” Focus on the isolation of Ethiopia, and Ethiopians being jealous of what they already possessed—namely, the age-old state, political freedom and spiritual *śaləṭane*—shaped the national psychological make-up. The writer exposed this political attitude as an explanation of material lag. Although lack of skill, love, peace and unity were causes, the major explanatory factor, according to this writer, was “we don’t think we can get more from others.” Opening to the world was a redemptive discourse; closing of the door and isolation from the world was an outdated tradition. The visit of Tāfäri to Europe, and sending young Ethiopians to Europe, were pilgrimages of *śaləṭane*. Ethiopia’s entry into the League of Nations was the country’s entry to the world. It was said (24 December 1930) that the Ethiopian emperors of the twentieth century believed their sacred country could survive eternally if it adopted European skills-based *śaləṭane*.

Another writer connected past glory with future *śaləṭane*, which would be a kind of renaissance. “Ethiopia has been shining for centuries. Its oil, which produced the light, has been consumed.” Using the metaphor of light, the writer captured the glory of the past and the eventual dimming, which he connected to the project of *śaləṭane* by saying that “the Prince [Tāfäri] is exerting his effort to prepare a new oil and fibre as the process of re-shining, renewing and rekindling Ethiopia” (29 January 1925). The rekindling of the light of Ethiopia was attributed to the enlightened king, the prophet of *śaləṭane* (30 April 1925): “We have known that Prince Tāfäri Mäkwännən’s major plan

and effort is to develop and civilise Ethiopia, therefore we shall accept his benevolent ideal and compete to work and to gain knowledge.”

The critical voice and the subaltern resistance against the hegemonic discourse of *šālātane* can only be read in fragments of the newspaper—or its silence, through reading against the grain. The critical voice from Ethiopian women is an example of counter-narrative. The discourse of material backwardness was not a negative representation of Ethiopia. There were others, critical voices against the urge and rush towards technology, who articulate the material lack optimistically: Ethiopia was a delayed wind that would surpass all eventually in terms of knowledge, wisdom and the delay itself associated with the personality of Ḥaylā Šəllase, the coming messiah who would awaken it at the right time. Ḥaylā Šəllase was presented like Moses, David, Joshua and Solomon whose leadership was needed for the awakening of the nation (26 October 1930). In time, Ḥaylā Šəllase was represented as a prophet of Ethiopian civilization, erasing the images of preceding emperors such as Mənilək and Tewodros. In the multiplicity of the meanings and conceptualizations of *šālātane* and *ləmat*, his speeches appeared to have incorporated these different meanings without erasing any but linking each to another. Ḥaylā Šəllase as the prophet of *šālātane* embraced the discourse and became its speaking subject and its creative agent.

The discourse of *šālātane* and *ləmat* was one of the justifications for the introduction of parliament and constitution, the initiative of the prophet of *šālātane*, the emperor. The goal was to introduce the new *šālātane* without compromising the old. “This constitution,” the emperor pronounced, “is not fiction. It does not deviate from the custom of our country and is close to the civilised people’s education,” ensuring the compromise and the negotiation between the old and the new, the local and the global. The constitution was the holy book of *šālātane* that signified Ethiopian progress and cultivation to local and foreign observers where colonial intervention was justified by the lack of civilization. For local consumption, the constitution was represented as a guide to “the development *ləmat* of Ethiopia, to the strength of our state, to the privilege and wealth of our beloved people” (16 July 1931).

Reading Against *Bərhanənnā Sālam*'s Grain: The Voice of the Subaltern

The following story is about the passengers of development, or modernity, in *Bərhanənnā Sālam*. In 1925, two passengers were travelling from Dire-Dawa to Addis Ababa on a train, one of the temples of civilization planned by Emperor Mənilək II and completed during the time of diarchy in 1917. One of the passengers was drinking waragi (a homebrewed gin) locally known as *araqe*, and offered some to the other, who declined to drink on grounds of his doctor's advice. This conversation turned into an insightful debate on civilization, its glory and its failings.

The waragi man complained that “the children of the new generation run to the doctor when you feel a bit of sickness, while Jesus is the only saviour”. He sarcastically asked: “Isn't waragi the main thing the *ferengi* [whites] brought to Ethiopia?”

The other passenger recounted the glory and great progress that Ethiopia had acquired from the foreigners, one being the railway which reduced the 29 to 30 days' travel by two days, and the improvement of business and export-import in association with the railway. He listed other temples of civilization such as schools, telephone and post. The man with the liquor dismissed the explanation and spoke nostalgically of an exotic journey from Dire-Dawa to Addis Ababa during the time of *Ras Mäkwännən*, one of Mənilək's most respected nobles and the father of Həylä-Šəllase, in the second half of the nineteenth century. He proudly described how they used to be told to pack their food, dress their servants and assemble their animals—the memory of the conversations; the singing of the servants and the music of the different instruments as they travelled to Addis Ababa; the way they rested at night, eating what they had packed and sleeping in a tent or under a tree. He asked what was wrong about travel like that for 30 days to reach Addis Ababa, and asked whether the train and railway had anything to offer besides bankruptcy and loss. The other passenger gave a detailed account of the benefits of the railway to business and trade, the marketing of Ethiopian production and the importation of goods from abroad. He challenged the other to find fault with the export

of grain—but the drinking man said he would see the grain and the fruit rot in his country rather than see it exported. At this point, the conversation comes to an end.

The critical man in the temple of civilization condemned the technology that speaks to the onset of the enlightened paradise. His was a rebel voice, disbelieving the preaching of utopia in the temple. Of the two individuals, one celebrated the train while the other saw it as exemplifying the decay of an earlier civilization.

Bərhənənnā Sālam did not record the critical voices of “traditional” subjects who opposed progress and civilization. It silenced such voices, and one needs to excavate the grain to discover them. The represented and the silent equally defined Ethiopian modernity, which is not only the helpless embracing of the new and hegemonic force but the critical engagement with it. The train symbolized the hegemony of progressive civilization and united the two passengers who represented the silenced voices. In short, different voices signify the discourse as hegemonic and totalizing but not total. As Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe put it, “Hegemony will allude to an absence of totality” and allow history to unfold as a contingency. Hegemony is an “articulatory practice” that presupposes the “incomplete and open chatter of the social’.”³²⁴ The discourse of civilization became an all-encompassing power discourse. The critical voices of the passengers represent subaltern voices resisting the introduction of technology. *Bərhənənnā Sālam* reported voices against sewing machines, for instance, arguing that clothes sewn on machines did not last for long. To a popular complaint about the high price of consumer goods the explanation was the amount of grain exported by the people (*Bərhənənnā Sālam*, 26 March 1925). There were rumours about the impact of cars on the rainfall as the main cause of famine. Farmers opposed the tractor, saying what they would do if the machine worked (2 January 1930). Others claimed that resistance to the introduction of the new into society was only to be expected. These subaltern voices could be seen as the earlier articulations of de-growth in Ethiopia.

324 Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p.134.

Land to the Peasant for National Civilization

In addition to the resistance against the machine, the most frequently articulated subaltern voice was raised on the question of land. The discourse on distributing land to the peasants and to the *zega* commoner was as old as the *Fəkkare Iyyäsus*. Emperor Tewodros II had tried to redistribute land, mainly church land, to the peasants. In the twentieth century, land and its tribute was one of the most politicized issues. In *Berhanena Sälam*, land was a core issue in constructing the discourse of *śālātane*. The imagined utopia rested on the expectation that the prophet of *śālātane* would distribute the land and standardize the tribute. The articulation of the land question as part of the discourse of civilization indicated that the discourse was neither total nor successful in depoliticizing the masses.

Bərhanənnā Sälam carried two insightful opinion pieces by Fesähä Wäldaä Michael on the land question. The first took the form of a fable in which land spoke to a man, Fesähä himself, complaining that it could not get its reward and care because many became fighters instead of farmers. The farmers were tired of the tribute being collected from them by the nobles; the tribute collectors amassed the resources without working the land, which had become uncultivated. The man promised to present the case in the *Bərhanənnā Sälam* newspaper.

The story appeared to be a modest representation of the land question and an exposure of the exploitative relationship between peasants and nobles who were in charge of collecting land tribute. In the next issue of the publication, Fesähä wrote:

For any palace, [the state] the two pillars are peasant and merchant. Merchant is fighting for itself so far though it needs the protection of the state. However, the peasant has been carrying the heaviest burden. Below the king, land is supposed to belong to the peasant. The peasant tills the land and harvests its fruit. This fruit is the base for the establishment of the household of the peasant and the strength for the state. Today land belongs to the cunning and shrewd one whose hand does not know how to till but how to

rule. The transformation of land is on the hand of the peasant. Hence, the hands of the shrewd remain full while the family of the peasant starve. The palace does not get its strength from the product either. The family of the peasant becomes the servant of the shrewd. The land does not get tilled since the children of the peasant left the care to their fathers. The pastoral king, the sun of the world, please visit your peasant who has suffered much. The land belongs to the peasant who farms it. Let the land be to the peasant ... land to the peasant! Let the king be the only ruler, let the land tribute be uniform.

A correct tribute is the strength of the palace.³²⁵

This article raised a question. It focused on the peasant-state relationship regarding land, calling on the emperor to take measures against those who owned land and tribute collection rights—generally the nobles and the officials—and called for a strong state led by the emperor to centralize tribute collection and distribute land to the peasantry. The idea was discussed in Gäbrä-Həywät's works and by other writers in *Bərhanənnā Šālam*; however, the discussion—which celebrated the student movement for the motto “land to the tiller”—did not did not historicize the discourse. The historiography of the revolution itself did not acknowledge the preceding progressive quests in the country but, rather, credited the global trend of the time for the students' radical questions of the 1960s and 70s.³²⁶ The call for solving the land question was pervasive (17 June 1926). The nobility were considered a civilizational other standing against Ethiopian *šālātane* and *lāmat* (16 May 1929). Real *šālātane* for the peasant meant to own land and this could have radically transformed the political economy of the country, had the question been addressed. It took four decades for this question to be heard and answered after the Ethiopian social revolution.

325 Fəssəha Wälədä Michael, “Nāfas Yä lämaqarāt zälalām Yənāfəsəl” (The wind will blow for ever), *Bərhanənnā Šālam*, 19 February 1931. [Translation by the author].

326 Bahru, *The Quest for Socialist Utopia*.

Barya and geta in the Bərhanənnā Sälām Discursive Community

The discourse of *śālātane* connected age-old manumission with the new global campaign for abolition. *Bərhanənnā Sälām* became a site for advocating manumission as a necessary condition for Ethiopia's *śālātane*. Manumission was also considered as an anti-colonial movement because slavery was one of the justifications for colonial intervention in places such as Ethiopia. Civilization and abolition were mobilized as an anti-colonial project; the liberation of both the master and the slave from bondage was seen as the primary condition for civilisation and for national freedom from colonial vulnerability. Slavery, manumission and abolition were thematic issues widely covered in *Bərhanənnā Sälām*. Masters and slaves also joined the discursive community, as readers, writers and listeners. The gradual shift was from the discourse of slavery which produced a master-slave dialectic to the discourse of civilization and progress that re-defined Ethiopian politics between the state as a civilizing agent and the masses as the receiver of civilization. Both the master and the slave became subjects.

One day in July 1926, three individuals met on the veranda of a building in Arada, the city centre of Addis Ababa. Two sheltered against the rain. The third, a peasant, was packing the goods he had bought from the market at Arada. The two were *mākonnənoč*, higher officials of the time. They began a conversation in which the officials were astonished by the peasant's manner and the content of his speech. They said: "You look like a peasant but your manners and speech inform us that you belong to a higher class." They asked to hear more about him and he told them that he was going to Arsi (a town south-west of Addis Ababa) and that he was born in Gofa (a town in the south). The officials suspected that he might be a liberated elite slave who had become an officer in Arsi. They asked his name. He told them his birth name was Babanto, his slavery name Eyamu Sira and his liberation name Nāwayä Kərstos (wealth of Christ). They asked if he was a soldier and he replied that he had been a slave. Then they read to him about the liberation of a slave, written by a Miss Etagägnähu, who had voluntarily liberated her slaves, as she had

confessed to *Bārhanānna Šālam*. In this process, the acts of writing, reading and listening by masters and slaves were brought into a *Bārhanānna Šālam* discursive community that thought and debated about *šālātane*. The former slave Nāwayä Kərstos told his story:

One day, one of my *geta*'s children insulted me saying *barya*. My *geta* heard this and read to me from Psalm 17 number 2, which says a wise slave would rule over the children of his master. Later I understood that I could be chief over his children if I behave and serve well. On another day I damaged some of the resources of my *geta*, who got angry. He told me that I was damaging my wealth. He added that I was free to leave if I wanted. I left, and served as a labourer for merchants for three years but I got tired and returned to my *geta* to make up with him. However, my *geta* was dead by then. In his will, the *geta* had left a certain piece of land to either my child or to me.³²⁷

The former slave Nāwayä Kərstos told in *Bārhanānna Šālam* of the benevolence of his *geta* who had willingly liberated him. His relationship with his *geta* had been that of the *barya-geta*, justified by baptism. He passed through the process and became a slave of God named Nāwayä Kərstos, the wealth of Christ. This household power relationship, however, occurred in the context of the national discourse of *šālātane*—abolition was a pre-condition for its realization. The pre-modern pattern of manumission after civilizing and baptism met with the modern discourse of abolition or liberation of the slave which connoted the civilization of the master.

Nāwayä Kərstos concluded his opinion piece saying that he had written it to express his love for his *geta*, and not out of the belief that it would explain freedom. His narrative shows that irrespective of the abolition of slavery the manumission process was realized following the age-old practice of liberating a slave after baptizing and civilizing, manifested in the triple naming: natal name, slave name and liberation name. Even if the law prohibited the slave trade and

327 *Bārhanānna Šālam*, 12 August 1926 [translation by the author].

enslavement, the fate of the individuals in bondage was left to the voluntary act of their masters. Manumission became a manifestation of master's self-subjugation to civilization and salvation, while slave-owning gradually came to symbolize otherness.

The liberation of slaves was required for national sovereignty. Slavery became a national (*Bəherawi*) issue, breaking the binary of slavery in the domestic realm (*betäsābawi*) in Ethiopia and the slave trade out of Ethiopia.³²⁸ The discourse of *śālātane* and the politics of joining the League of Nations for collective security was an instrument for the ascendancy of slavery into a national issue. The story of slaves only entered the public space when the national quest for civilisation, sovereignty and collective security became enabling conditions. The abolition itself appears a creeping process like *śālātane*. If abolition is the defining element of *śālātane*, most nobles and officials became a civilizational other by the mere fact of owning slaves at the household level. People were reluctant to liberate their slaves. There was a discussion between state officials about slavery in 1930 when Täklä-Hawaryat called for the liberation of all slaves, in both palace and household. Some nobles supported the idea but the most powerful, *Ras Kassa*, opposed it and the issue was postponed.³²⁹ *Bərhanənnā Sālam* silenced the story of these individuals who opposed manumission and abolition.

Slavery was considered the antithesis of Ethiopia's *śālātane* and national sovereignty. Fəqrənnā Agälgəlot Mahbär (the Love and Service association) was established in 1926 to educate people about slavery. One of the emperor's men, Hakim Workenh, was its founder and several others were members. Märsäce Həzān, the editor of *Bərhanənnā Sālam*, was the secretary of the association, so its work could easily be published. The association actively advocated for manumission and rehabilitated manumitted slaves. One of its services, in the spirit of Christianity, was to provide education and training to the manumitted ones and to orphans.

Slavery violated the principle, of freedom, so the association began to work on the voluntary abolition of slaves, reporting

328 Säyfu, "Yäbarya sām bā' amaraw baḥəl".

329 Täklä-Hawaryat, *Autobiography*, p.41.

that around 600 were liberated from members of the association. Technical schools for liberated children were established, and in 1926 the school admitted about 50 former-slave students for basic education and skills training. When masters manumitted their slaves, members would announce it in *Bārhanānna Šālam* which became a place where those who violated the freedom of others in the name of slavery could confess their sin and receive mercy to become a true subject of šālātane.

A slave owner, a woman named *Etagägñāhu*, an anti-slavery activist and possibly a member of the association, wrote in *Bārhanānna Šālam* that she had confessed to owning a slave, and declared that she had liberated her slave and encouraged others to do the same. Her confessional opinion piece combined the discourses of šālātane and of slavery. She began by comparing “the custom of the past and the progress of the present,” arguing that “in this era of freedom or *nātsanāt*, for the sake of our country’s survival, we free our slaves and we have to manumit slaves we have bought.” She declared that her slave was liberated for the sake of Ethiopia. She condemned those who were reluctant to manumit — “to say ‘how I can live without a slave’ is an exaggerated arrogance” — and she argued that the hierarchical relationship and the service of poor to rich would inevitable remain post-abolition. “It is a law that the rule of the rich over the poor means the strong over the lazy ... if we strive to be rich and strong we will always have servants around us ... if we are generous, the slaves will not go away from their homes ... what we should do is grant their freedom” (4 July 1926).

In the same edition of *Bārhanānna Šālam*, Hakim Wārkināh, another intellectual of the time, boldly criticised the practice of slavery in Ethiopia and demonstrated that slavery was wrong in the political, religious and commercial sense. In respect of religion, Wārkināh said it was a sin to see equally created beings as unequal and to inflict violence upon them in the name of slavery. “It is known that out of 100 slaves 50 will die of hunger or disease.” Slavery was not profitable to the nation, he wrote, nor to the household, and it was politically incorrect. “Foreigners are writing a lot about slavery in Ethiopia and spoiling the image of the country. Therefore slavery

affects the dignity and sovereignty of Ethiopia.” Like Etagägnähu, he called for the voluntary liberation of slaves.

The writings of these two, using the principles of *śaləṭane* and abolition, broke the public silence. Both writers must have received criticism, to the extent that Hakim Wärkinäh wrote a disclaimer and correction, saying that the state of Ethiopia is was committed to the abolition process as one element of *śaləṭane* and apologised for writing about what had happened in the past as if it was still taking place (7 August 1926). Ms Etagägnähu reported in *Bərhanənnā Sālam* the responses of her family:

My relatives criticised my deeds and writing about manumitting my slave. They asked me what disease got me that made me hate wealth. I told them my wealth is Ethiopia and I aspire to free the elder slave too. I do not excel my elders but I want to encourage them to do the same.³³⁰

The campaign for abolition persisted. The association used drama and poetry to create awareness about slavery and *śaləṭane*. Like the fable, the plays depicted the subject of *śaləṭane* and its other, and its reluctant subject who resists *śaləṭane* despite the prince working to civilize the people and to develop his country.

The discourse of *śaləṭane* and abolition define both the *geta* and the *barya* as other, both deserving to be educated and enlightened. When the *geta* liberated his slaves he announced his commitment and devotion to *śaləṭane*. What he did in the household realm was considered a contribution to the progress of the public. The slave became a commoner, a member of the multitude, receiving a Christian name to now live as a servant to his former *geta*, or to engage in another livelihood. The liberation of the slave signified the civilization of the master.

Conclusion

This chapter has been deliberately episodic, one event leading to another. The constant in the story is that the discourse itself is united by difference. Using newspapers as ethnographic sites, the

330 Etagägnähu, “Yä zəmədəna wäqäsa Yä ləj məlash” (Friendly blame and a response from a child). *Bərhanənnā Sālam*, 15 July 1926.

chapter presented this differentiated discourse of civilization and development before the occupation of Ethiopia by Italy from 1936 to 1941. It became a pervasive theme, totalizing and hegemonic, encompassing and animating. Manumission; the building of schools or investing in other infrastructure; unveiling and sending children to school; reading a book or writing in a newspaper; dethroning a prince or crowning a queen; the promulgation of a constitution and the introduction of a parliament—all were justified by the discourse of *šālāṭāne* and *lāmat*. The discussion of the historical text, the fable and the newspaper show that there was no exclusive authority, “pioneer of change” or “guardian of tradition”. There was, rather, a civilizational discursive tradition that united diverse speaking and creative subjects. Differing social groups were subjected to the principle of state developmentalism, the community of *šālāṭāne* connected by the printed word as in *Bārhanānna Šālam* and books.

Dispersed and fragmented subjects were united through their debates for and against progress and change, with multiple concepts, arguments and ways of speaking and writing. The discourse itself served as a social and popular history of development in Ethiopia. As depicted in this chapter, the most radical criticism of the hegemonic narratives and the temples of civilization did not come from outside the train of progress. The discourse was not totalizing. Social fissures allowed articulation and re-articulation as well as negotiation and re-negotiation. The railway, a magnificent temple of civilization, could be seen as a demonic temple representing regression and decay rather than improvement and progress. The machine was also seen as a symbol of destruction or *ṭəfat* and not as a temple of *lāmat* or development. There was neither a unifying subject nor an ideology other than the development dialogue which exhibited internal difference as seen from different sites.

Colonial Developmentalism and Politics: From Occupation to Legacy

I WAS TAKING MY son to school, passing one of the roundabouts in Addis Ababa where the statue of Emperor Ménélik II is erected. The statue depicts the emperor galloping furiously to the north, perhaps to the battle of Adwa where Ethiopia defeated an Italian colonial force in 1896. One day, my son, pointing at the statue, had asked me where Ménélik was heading. I told him he was going to chase out the white men who came to steal from our country. On another day, my son pointed at white men in a café and asked me, “What are those white men doing here and how come Ménélik left them behind?”

It was a very difficult question to answer, for a four-year-old boy, as it warrants stretching the question beyond the presence in Africa of some ordinary white men to debating colonial studies. Legacy as a mode of historical inquiry is the first choice for tackling the question,³³¹ as it engages and counters another mode of inquiry which considers the colonial period as an episode, an exception, a page and a parenthesis signifying a rupture in the long history of Africa.³³² Italy’s occupation of Ethiopia has been seen as “a page of Ethiopian

331 See Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

332 See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa* (New York: New World, 1965); Basil Davidson, *The Lost Cities of Africa* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970); J.F. Ade Ajayi and Ian Espie, eds., *A Thousand Years of West African History* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1969); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Dar es Salaam: Tanzanian Publishing House, 1973); William Leo Hansberry, *Pillars in Ethiopian History* volume I (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1981).

history”.³³³ It has been represented as an insignificant moment, an episode. This chimes with the historiographical representation of the colonial era as “occupation” by African nationalist historians such as Ade Ajayi and Cheikh Anta Diop. Italy’s occupation of Ethiopia has also been seen as a failed colonial attempt, and represented as war and crisis, an assumption that rules out the question of how Italy ruled Ethiopia even for those five years. This chapter rethinks the occupation discourse in light of the Italian policy of colonial developmentalism and its effort to mobilize an alternative social base from non-Christian and non-Amharic speaking subjects. It considers the legacy of the Italian occupation as integral to the genealogy of state developmentalism and political policy in Ethiopia since the 1940s. The chapter engages the literature of Italian colonialism as compared with the theory and history of colonial rule in wider continental Africa. A reading of colonial newspapers as ethnographic sites captures the ethos of Italian colonial rule in Ethiopia.

Yä-Roma Berhan (The light of Rome), an Amharic newspaper, replaced *Berhanena-Sälam*. *Yä-qesar Mängəst Mälaktännä* (The messenger of Caesar’s state) and *Təhadäst Ityopya* (The Renaissance of Ethiopia), established in 1936, preached Italy’s colonial civilizational mission, and introducing colonial laws and regulations in addition to everyday news reporting for the natives.

The motto of *Yä-qesar Mängəst Mälaktännä* signified civilization and progress as the ethos and mode of colonial rule. Renaissance itself presumes the presence of a civilization, externalized through colonial historiography. Italian colonial rule was represented as one example of the “laboratories of modernity” through which technology, reason and progress was introduced to the native Africans.³³⁴ In this discourse, Ethiopia’s “renaissance”, like those of ancient civilizations, materialized through external intervention. Ethiopia’s modernity in the twentieth century also needed external and colonial midwifery—and Italy presented itself as a candidate.

333 Richard Pankhurst, “A Page of Ethiopian History: Italian Settlement Plans During the Fascist Occupation of 1939-41. *Ethiopian Observer* Vol. 13 Number 03 (1963).

334 Stoler and Cooper, “Between Metrople and Colony,” p.5.

In *Yä-qesar Mängəst Mälaktäñña* and *Yä-Roma Berhan*, the style of writing and content were strikingly similar to that of *Bərhanənnā Sälām* although neither hosted a public debate on civilization, reducing the public to mere readers. *Yä-Roma Berhan* retained some of the legacy of *Bərhanənnā Sälām*, as the title of the newspaper shows. It is very striking that no conceptual rupture occurred between *Bərhanənnā Sälām*, a pre-colonial newspaper, and the colonial Amharic newspaper which redeployed the same concepts, such as *śəltāne*, to articulate the idea of progress, civilization and development—but it was the establishment of Caesar’s colonial government in Ethiopia that was presented as the introducer of *śəltāne*.³³⁵

All these colonial newspapers deployed the discourse of *śəltāne* accompanied by photographs of infrastructure—schools, roads and hospitals for the natives—that colonial developmentalism considered as temples of civilization. This chapter relies therefore on these newspapers to shed light on the nature of the Italian colonial rule and to question the occupation thesis. Through the analysis of Ḥaylā-Šelassie’s state developmentalism and de-tribalization policy, the chapter depicts the legacy of Italian indirect rule.

Colonial Discourse: Humanitarian Civilization and Late Colonial Developmentalism

From the 1920s onwards, Italy was preparing to expand its colonial empire in Africa by colonizing Ethiopia after the humiliating defeat at the battle of Adwa in 1896. For some, it was the “Adowa complex” that explains the political psychology of the fascist party’s obsession with colonizing Ethiopia³³⁶ and erasing the scar left by the 1896 defeat. Italy’s old ambition, to colonize Ethiopia for economic and settlement purposes, also motivated the new conquest in the twentieth century. As part of its strategy, the fascist regime was documenting “the defection of chiefs to show Europe that Italy was not *occupying* Ethiopia but *liberating* it from feudalism and eliminating slavery”.

335 *Yä-qesar Mängest Melaktegan* Vol. 27 No 28, 1940.

336 Angelo Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War 1935-1941* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 3–16.

³³⁷ Italy's primary ambition was to realize colonialism through diplomacy, competing with France and Britain in sponsoring Ethiopia's admission to the League of Nations.³³⁸

"Violence and negotiation, dismantling and reconfiguration"³³⁹ was the rule of the modern colonizing processes. The attempt to colonize Ethiopia by mobilizing the provincial nobility and by diplomacy was followed by violence, "*de bellatio*: military conquest".³⁴⁰ Violence was indeed, as Fanon wrote, an indispensable feature of colonial foundation and maintenance.

Italy's intervention, occupation or colonization of Ethiopia has been debated in the historiography. Firstly, there is a debate concerning the conceptual description and representation of the five-year period. This is related to the binary debate in Africanist historiography about the colonial experience—as an insignificant rupture on one hand and a significant historical experience on the other. Ethiopian historiography reproduced the rupture narrative, using the concept of occupation. The period is popularly described in Amharic as *yä-Talian gize*, the Italian era. Occupation also became a significant theme that attracted literary works, novels and plays.³⁴¹

It is worth discussing the concept of 'occupation' before deliberating on the second related debate. Occupation as a European legal concept emerged in relation to the Congress of Vienna in 1815, although the practice was much older. Nehal Bhuta has briefly mapped the conceptual history of belligerent occupation in European legal history,³⁴² depicting how the right to conquer and acquire effective control of another state had a legal basis in classical European "international" law, and arguing that the concept of belligerent occupation or *occupatio bellica* "develops as a legal

337 Alberto Shacchi, *Ethiopia Under Mussolini Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London: Zed, 1985).

338 Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War*, p.12.

339 Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon*, p.11

340 Shacchi, *Ethiopia Under Mussolini*, p.24.

341 Banti Zelealem, "The Theme of Italian Occupation in Major Amharic Novels and Plays," MA Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Addis Ababa University, 1990.

342 Nehal Bhuta, "The Antinomies of Transformative Occupation" *European Journal of International Law* Vol. 16 no.4 EJIL 2005.

status defined in contraposition to *de bellatio*". Occupation is defined as a "temporary state of fact", provisional military control and administration, but with "no legal entitlement to exercise the rights of the absent sovereign" and an "intermediate status between invasion and conquest, during which the continuity of the juridical and material constitution is maintained". *De bellatio* signifies colonization, a condition of "subjugation" in which the sovereign is not merely temporarily incapacitated from exercising his powers because of the presence of an occupying military forces, but is completely defeated, his institutions of state destroyed, his international legal personality dissolved, with no allies continuing to fight on his behalf.³⁴³

In the aftermath, Italy's colonial period in Ethiopia was retrospectively conceptualized as temporary military control and administration over another state where the sovereign was exiled and the so-called international allies under the League of Nation appeased the invading force. In the words of Arnold J. Toynbee, the members of the League, mainly Britain and France, complemented the "Mussolinian sin of commission" by their "sin of omission."³⁴⁴ Despite the brevity of the period, the Italian force destroyed the state institutions, introduced a new colonial law, and worked till the end for the dismemberment of the state of Ethiopia.

Scholars debated the motivation, the justification for and the historical role of Italy. Its colonial violence was combined with debates between students of Italian colonialism. Scholars describe the major justification for the colonial empire of Italian East Africa, or *Africa Orientale Italiana*, as a humanitarian mission rather than an economic one. However, Richard Greenfield has argued that "economic development is no justification of Italian rule" and that "the African's indictment of colonialism is essentially human rather than economic".³⁴⁵ For scholars such as Greenfield, Italy's colonial intervention in Ethiopia differed from late colonial

343 Bhuta, "The Antinomies," p.725, quoting Vattel, Verzijl and Oppenheim on international law.

344 Arnold J. Toynbee, "A Tale of Sin and Nemesis," in *The Ethiopian Crisis, Touchstone of Appeasement?* Ed. Ludwig F. Schaefer (Boston: Heath, 1961), pp.58-60.

345 Greenfield, *Ethiopia: A New Political History*, p.237.

developmentalist policy intervention which was based on “notably the welfare state and industrial relations”,³⁴⁶ as in the metropole. The discourse of civilization—including the promise of economic benefits in the metropole to future settlers, and hope of progress for the natives—was the predominant definition of the mode of rule, and colonizing Ethiopia was therefore presented by Italy as liberating the people of Ethiopia from the shackles of custom, slavery and systematic feudalism. It was Italy’s justification. Mario Pigli, one of the propagandists of Italian civilization in Ethiopia wrote, “Where squalor and slavery reigned, the free and liberated populations now enjoy the social and economic order of Italian rule.”³⁴⁷ The only crime Italy committed by invading Ethiopia, according to Benito Mussolini, was that “it is a crime to carry civilization to backward countries and to construct roads and schools”.³⁴⁸ Colonization was justified by the will and ability to destroy the “pre-capitalist formations” and liberate the people of Ethiopia, supposedly a land of chaos and disorder. Italy’s colonial mission was presented as a pacifying intervention to enforce order over the civil unruliness of post-Mənilək Ethiopia—fitting to the general discourse of modern colonial civilization as a means of “spreading the rule of law”.³⁴⁹

It was more, however, than a secular crusade to install progress in Ethiopia. It takes a religious dimension to appease the political elite of the Arabic world that described Ethiopia as a barbaric country which “oppressed Islam” and “oppressed Arabism”.³⁵⁰ The colonial policy, of politicizing religion in Ethiopia was an extension of Italy’s self-claimed protectorate of Islam and Arab interest at the international level. The colonial government sponsored both the building of churches and the construction of mosques. As is common in colonial rule, the management of difference and pluralism was combined with the intention to civilize. While the native was

346 Frederick Cooper, *The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.16.

347 Mario Pigli, *Italian Civilization in Ethiopia*, Dante Alighieri Society, 1936), p.60.

348 Paulos, “Mussolini’s ‘Civilizing Mission’,” p.332.

349 Mamdani, *Define and Rule*, p.45.

350 Erlich, *Ethiopia and the Middle East*, p.114

considered uncivilized compared to the colonizer, the language of pluralism and difference represents colonial rule through the inclusion of all culturally differing natives.³⁵¹

Śālṭane and Sālam were consistently deployed after the capture of Addis Ababa in 1936, on the eve of which colonial force dropped pamphlets promising civilization and peace to the residents.³⁵² In the newspaper *Yä-Roma Berhan*, civilization and peace were constantly invoked to justify colonial rule. Peace, for the colonizer, meant defeating and eliminating the anti-colonial resistance forces it described as *shifṭa* or bandit and anti-civilization.

In the metropole, colonization was represented as a path to economic utopia for Italian settlers in Ethiopia—a source of raw materials and a colony for settlement were the rationale of Italy's colonial ambition. At the international level, politically and culturally, Ethiopia was also considered a centre for the dissemination of Italian and Fascist civilization in Africa and Asia. Italy's occupation of Ethiopia was a continuation of its colonization of Eritrea, justified by the mission "to introduce among these people a moral, civil and economic regeneration which are the fruits of modern civilization".³⁵³ The major task of the three native newspapers was to disseminate this discourse of civilization and the progress made through the colonial intervention. Narratives and visuals of Italy's commitment to Ethiopia's civilization and development dominated the newspapers. News about health—mainly, the colonial government's effort in fighting disease—was a persistent content of the discourse of civilization. The campaign against communicable diseases such as malaria was represented as a war declared by Italian medical doctors to save the natives. Newspapers were used as sites to show the temples of civilization such as technical schools, clinics, hospitals, highways and bridges as the embodiment of the colonial developmental mission.

351 Mamdani, *Define and Rule*. See the language of exclusion and inclusion, pp.44–45.

352 Sbachi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*.

353 Tekeste Negash, *Italian Colonialism*, p.77, quoting a colonial textbook in Eritrea.

Italian Indirect Rule and the Local State of the Natives

Occupation signifies foreign military rule, for a relatively short period. The five-year stay of Italians in Ethiopia was, rather, intensified colonial rule with a strong political legacy. In Europe, the legacy of Nazi occupation is largely studied in consideration of the pre-occupation French institutions in comparison with those imposed by the occupier. The complete destruction of the institutions and laws of the occupied state and the annihilation of its sovereignty would qualify the act as beyond invasion and occupation. Alberto Sbacchi, referring to the nature of colonial rule, argued that “the fascist colonial administration was based on direct rule because they mistrusted the Ethiopians”, and justified this argument with the elimination of the Ethiopian elites from their positions because “Italy hoped to bring modern ways of life to Ethiopia”.³⁵⁴ I argue, however, that Italian colonial rule was indirect rule, although the destruction of the already existing state structure gave it the look of direct rule. As Hayle Larebo argued, “in order to conquer Ethiopia, the total dismemberment of the existing administrative structure of the empire became necessary. Everything was hurriedly reorganized ex-novo cutting across religious and ethnic divisions.”³⁵⁵ The destruction of the existing state structure tells, rather, only of the making of a *new* structure—the colonial structure of indirect rule. It indicates that the invasion was a colonial project.

Italy’s institutional set-up was a contradictory discourse of humanitarian civilization and colonial developmentalism combined with settler colonialism, tribalism and racial military administration and rule. Italian colonial administration mobilized race to distinguish the colonizer from the colonized and tribe, and used religion to enforce difference among the natives. Italian colonial rule fits the theory of indirect rule organized, in the words of Mahmood Mamdani, “to remake the subjectivities of the entire population” and shape “the present, past and future of the colonized” through the

354 Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

355 Haile, *The Building of an Empire: Italian Land Policy and Practice in Ethiopia* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2006), p.51.

triad of setting new political identities, rewriting the historiography, and through law and administration.³⁵⁶ This does not contradict the civilizing discourse that was the feature of ancient colonialism and its rule by assimilation. According to Mamdani, “[d]irect and indirect rule were not two consecutive phases in the development of colonial governance ... [Rather they] continued in tandem: the civilizing mission (assimilation) existed along the management of difference (pluralism).” The Italian colonial project in Ethiopia deployed a discourse of civilization and cultural difference. It successfully utilized religion (mainly Islam) to create political subjectivity. Since the late nineteenth century, race and tribe, according to Mamdani, were “the two politicized identities” in colonial Africa, whereas in colonial India they were caste, religion and tribe. In Ethiopia, Italy utilized race, tribe and religion as political identity and to shape the subjectivity of the natives. Like that of any other modern colonialism, racism was the salient feature of fascist Italy’s colonial discourse, a derivative of German anti-semitism and “Nordic racism”.³⁵⁷ It began with the “other” at home, the Jewish minority in Italy. According to the “Manifesto of Racial Scientist” of 1938 there was an “irremediable divide between Jews and Italians”,³⁵⁸ The manifesto prompted racial superiority of Italians over Africans, mixing race with geography. According to Samson Bezabeh, it was the manifesto that guided Italian policy in Ethiopia where the Ethiopians and other subjects such as Yemeni Arabs were considered racially inferior.³⁵⁹ The fascist party relied on this manifesto in building a colonial state in Africa.³⁶⁰ However, social evolution was problematic in Ethiopia, where archeological sites bore witness to an ancient civilizations, and colonial historiography could not simply impose social evolution on the history of the colonized space. What is called the “meta-history

356 Mamdani, *Define and Rule*, p.45.

357 Paulos Milkias, “Musoloni’s ‘Civilizing Mission’, and Fascist Political Socialization in Occupied Ethiopia 1936–1941”. Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Hamburg 2003. Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian studies, Hamburg, 2003.

358 Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2001), p.149.

359 Samson, *Subjects of Empires*, p.156

360 Paulos, “Musoloni’s Civilizing Mission”.

[which] is written in bold within the frame of race ... to represent historical progress, culminating in the development of the state,”³⁶¹ could not be re-written without the addition of a theoretical tool. Hence, in Ethiopia, as in other similar colonized spaces, the manifesto was complemented by additional historiographical theory. Hamitic thesis as historiographical theory or assumption was deployed to externalize the mythical origin of some Ethiopians who contributed to ancient civilization, while alienating the natives from its history.³⁶²

Historiography, as Mamdani has theorized, shaped the past. The major assumption of the Hamitic hypothesis was “externalizing civilizing influence” as agents of change and at the same time representing black Africa as a site of stagnation.³⁶³ The discourse of racism also included a humanitarian-oriented white man’s burden in Africa in which the colonized subject was a less human category until Italy’s civilizational mission arrived to transport the native into the world of humanity and then to modernity. The historical changes and civilization of the past were retrospectively associated with newer migrant people such as the Sabians, for example. The Amharan and Tigrayan people were thought to be similar to Berbers and Fulani as the Hamites, while people settled in the southern part of Ethiopia were represented as natives similar to Hutu and Hausa.³⁶⁴ This historiography also slipped into the national historiography and ideology of the ruling Ethiopian elites, as did the historiography of Nigeria, Rwanda and Sudan.³⁶⁵

Modernity and the liberation of the natives needed a new agent of change from abroad. The Italian colonial mission was justified by liberating ethnically oppressed groups and its midwifery of civilization and modernity in the region. The Amhara subjugation of Ethiopian society was dominant in the anti-Ethiopian literature of the time.³⁶⁶ The paradox of Italy’s colonial discourse was its

361 Mamdani, *Define and Rule*, p.53.

362 See Samson, *Subjects of Empires*, pp.156–157.

363 See Mamdani, *Savior and Survivors*, pp.175–178.

364 See Father Gasparini Gabra-Mariam *Yä-Ityopia Tarik*; Asräs *Tebé Axum*.

365 Mamdani, *Define and Rule*, p.55

366 Debeb Eshetu *Ityopia: yä Barud Bärmél* (Los Angeles: Tsehay Publishers, 2007). Amharic translation of Roman Parochzka’s book. The major

implementation of settler colonialism in Ethiopia on one hand, while humanitarian and progressive intervention guided by racial principles defined its mission on the other hand.³⁶⁷ This paradox is visible in how fascist colonial policy represented Addis Ababa as both object of its civilizing mission and space for settler colonialism. Addis Ababa was represented as “the true Negro city” signifying not only the color of the inhabitants but also the “disorganized” and “undisciplined” behaviour that justified colonial intervention. “Its permissivity was one justification for conquering it; but on the other hand, Italian architects had to build there rather than *de novo* because of its [Addis Ababa’s] specific historic meaning”.³⁶⁸ Mussolini declared that “the capital will be Addis Ababa” mainly because of prestige and despite its being thought of as a primitive and disorganized city. Disorganization signified de-segregation; the civilization mission began with plan for segregation and separate development for native and settler. In 1936 it was reported that the plan was

... complete reconstruction of the city on an imposing scale. The European and native quarters are to be separate and provisions was made for the natives themselves to be divided into various sections according to race [tribe] and religion.”³⁶⁹

The first Italian plan for Addis Ababa, for example, comprised the native quarter (*quartiere indigeno*), the commercial quarter (*quartiere commerciale*) and the Italian quarter (*quartiere italiano*), with one political centre (*centro politico*), and green zones (*zone verdi*).³⁷⁰ This also applied to other cities such as Dire Dawa where the binary of native space or *ville Indigène/ magala* and settlers or the *Ville Europeenne/ Gazira* was organized.³⁷¹

.....
argument of this book is a call for the dismemberment of Ethiopia.

367 See Haile, *The Building of an Empire*, p.57 on the contradiction of civilization mission and native policy.

368 Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism* (London: Routledge, 2009), p.199.

369 British Foreign Office confidential, “Italian annexation of Ethiopia: Development schemes.” Refers to Rome dispatch No. 725. Telegram from Mr Ingram to Mr Aden, Rome J7625/3957/1 September 1936.

370 Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, p.198.

371 Samson, *Subjects of Empires Citizens of States*, p. 55

Besides the 1936 plan for Addis Ababa, from 1936 to 1939 three other plans were formulated for the city. Based on racial principles, separate development between the native and the settler was key to the planning task. “Segregation extending to terminology” referred to the idea of “quarter” for a natives’ neighbourhood and “centre” or “city” for the settlers.³⁷²

In addition to analysis of colonial historiography, law and institution, this Italian segregationist policy can be captured based on the architectural planning of cities such as Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The management of the urban space or geography through architecture reflects the binary political identity of settler-native; white-colored; civilized-primitive, and colonizer and colonized. Sanitation, greening, order and equitable distribution of land to the native justified the construction of the natives’ quarter.

The racial politicized identities were enforced through law, which preceded the management of space and geography through architecture. The architecture of separate development was a derivative discourse from the management of difference through law and historiography. Law, following historiography, defined the subject, and architecture redefined the space to fit with the new definition of the subject. Hence, architecture and separate development discourse were part of the colonial mode of rule and governance. The defining precedes the rule, as Mahmood Mamdani argued in his book *Define and Rule*.

Social Darwinism as a science, historiography, anthropology, law and architecture was deployed in colonial governance. Racism was a central principle of Italian colonial practice in Ethiopia, prohibiting inter-race marriage (although it was not altogether successful).³⁷³ It “upholds the universal principle of the superiority of the white race and takes the appropriate steps to ensure that the purity of its blood is not polluted by miscegenation.”³⁷⁴ Historiography reconstructed the past. Architecture was made to carve space for the settlers and keep the purity of the Italian “Aryan” race while colonial

372 Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*, p.206.

373 Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*.

374 Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War*, p.231.

and humanitarian developmentalism was being conducted in the natives' quarters.

Controlling about one-third of Ethiopia, Italy declared its colonial empire *Africa Orientale Italiana*. In 1936, it declared the organic law known as in Italian the *legge Organica*, a legal support to the military and colonial conquest. Later came a charter, *Ordinamento Politico Amministrativo*. Italian settlers were "citizens of *optime jure*, and the Ethiopians who were treated as a subject people and enjoyed no rights whatsoever, although, divided into categories according to their tribal origins, some of them were favoured with certain 'privileges.'" ³⁷⁵ The native authority rested on custom, religion and language difference. Italians were united citizens of the colonial empire while Ethiopians were the native subjects disunited by their "tribal" and religious lines. The major objective of the "native policy or *politica indigena* was to subordinate the indigenous population's interest to metropolitan politics." ³⁷⁶ Education of the natives was one of the instruments of this subornation of the natives. ³⁷⁷

Under the *Africa Orientale Italiana*, Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa were divided by ethnic or linguistic and religious differences into four governorships over tribal homelands such as Amhara, Harar, Oromo-Sidama and Shoa, while the Tigreña-speaking community was combined as Eritrea and the Somali-speaking community joined Italian Somalia. Each governorship was divided into commissioners, residencies, and vice residences; and each resident combined districts headed by *Meslāné* and villages headed by *cheka shum* or village chiefs—the last two tiers of the state made up the local native authority. The regime eliminated most of the upper and middle nobles and provincial leaders and replaced them with Italian residents, leaving intact the lowest office of local head of a village or *cheqa-shum*. ³⁷⁸

Ethnic identity and religious difference were both used in constricting the native authority of the local state. When the two

375 Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War*, p.229.

376 Haile, *The Building of an Empire*, p.57.

377 Paulos, "Musoloni's Civilizing mission".

378 Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*, pp.86–91.

overlapped, religion was given primacy—for example, in areas where the Amharic-speaking Christian community dominated, education was given in Amharic, whereas if Amharic-speaking Muslims dominated, Arabic was the language of school. For the Amharic-speaking community Arabic was an ecclesiastical language and hence the decision seems justified by religion rather than ethnic identity—but, for Christians, Amharic was not an ecclesiastical language. It was the language of the emperor's court and palace whereas Ge'ez was the language of the church. The colonial ruler paradoxically deployed different languages as the official tongue of the local state. The colonial strategy was therefore to counter-balance Amharic by making Arabic an official language in the Muslim-dominated areas, irrespective of the vernacular language at use. The Arabization project was also linked to the global geopolitics of the time. The politicization of Islam by the colonial regime through Arabization and the institutionalization of Sharia law was part of the Italian plan to make its colonial empire in the Horn of Africa “[p]art of their oriental Mediterranean dream.”³⁷⁹

Religious difference was mobilized in local communities to crush anti-colonial resistance. In Muslim-dominated areas, Sharia law was institutionalized for Muslims. Italy “tried to divide and rule the country by portraying Muslims as the oppressed and orthodox Christians as the oppressors.”³⁸⁰ As predicted, Italy's pro-Muslim policy was to produce an alternative social base. The reorganization of the empire along ethnic and religious lines was intended to raise consent and loyalty from the non-Christian community. Units of governance were organized to ensure ethnic and religious unity, mainly of Muslims. Islamic court was institutionalized under the *qadis* or Sharia judges. New mosques were built.

Custom was significant as an organizing principle in the making of the colonial state. A social element within a particular community in the pre-modern became an instrument of law in

379 Haggai Erlich, *Ethiopia and the Middle East*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p.122.

380 Samson Bezabeh, *Citizens of State/Subjects of Empire*, (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2016), p.118.

colonial modernity.³⁸¹ The colonial philosophy itself promoted the establishment of native authority based on custom, which was the major principle of reorganizing the empire. The concept of *limad*, Amharic for custom, was dominant in constructing the law for the natives. Both ethnic and religious identities were considered part of the native custom, including the Arabic language.

Local courts followed the same principle in the administration of justice among subjects but their decisions could be reversed at resident level by Italian administrators. The Italian governor determined the establishment of the Sharia courts, the appointment of its *qadi* or judge, and its jurisdiction. The resident was the primary administrative officer to ensure the protection of religious rights and the delivery of education and health services to win the hearts of the colonized. The offices of the residences, however, were filled with military officers. In essence, the colonial administration was military because it failed to attract civilian professionals owing to poor working conditions and persistent attacks from the patriots.

As part of this racial and tribal separate development rule, employing Amhara in government offices and using the Amharic language outside Amhara territories was prohibited (“No power sharing with the *ras*”³⁸² was the motto of the Italian colonial officer, assuming that all *rases* (heads or generals) were Amhara, as part of the intent to eliminate “the hegemony of the Amhara over other ethnic groups.”³⁸³ This was an attempt to attach birth to homeland. Mahmood Mamdani has termed land rights and participation in local public affairs “the exclusive preserve of natives said to belong to the homeland.”³⁸⁴

The demobilization of the Amharic-speaking subject from the colonial state is a reflection of the colonial historiography in which Ethiopian history was represented as ethnic strife with Amhara dominance. The history of Ethiopian state formation was written as a series of mere ethnic wars in which the Amharic-speakers

381 Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, p.xvii.

382 Haile, *The Building of an Empire*, p.56

383 Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*, p.159.

384 Mamdani, *Define and Rule*, p.3.

disposed land from non-Amharic people; scholars such as Alberto Sbacchi reproduced this writing of tribal war into Italian colonial history.³⁸⁵ The same narrative dominated both mainstream and critical writings.³⁸⁶ Self-determination for all natives was seen as a strategy to dismember Ethiopia. Italian colonial officers perceived that by mobilizing a protectorate image of the colonial state and anti-Amhara sentiment, they could easily produce consent from non-Amharic speakers. The primordial view of ethnic identity, and a policy to associate tribe with the tribal homeland, were intended mainly for “the total disappearance of Ethiopia as a geographical unit.”³⁸⁷ It was true that the court and palace language of the empire had been becoming Amharic, mainly since the nineteenth century. However, the army and higher officers of the empire were recruited from the wider empire by means such as voluntary submission, slavery and captivity.

In his book, *Ethiopia under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience*, Alberto Sbacchi wrote how Italy used the Muslim community against the Amhara anti-colonial struggle, as if there were no Muslim Amharic speakers. Sbacchi portrayed the Muslims as collaborators because of the relative liberty they gained under Italian rule, while anti-colonial resistance fighters were portrayed as an Amhara Christian group. This is the legacy of the Hamitic hypothesis, which saw only certain groups, such as Amhara, or Tutsi, as foreign state makers and agents of civilization. However, what Sbacchi’s historical analysis missed is that the Italian colonial empire was displacing an already existing empire, based on competing nationalisms in the *longue durée*. The modern Ethiopian state had been built on the pre-modern state formation process, which involved numerous polities mobilized, inter alia, through religion. Although the modern state amalgamated differing linguistic religious groups under the dominant imperial ethos of Christianity and the

385 Sbacchi, *Ethiopia under Mussolini*, pp.157–159.

386 See Levine, *Wax and Gold*; Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*; and Asafa Jalata, *Oromia and Ethiopia, State Formation and Ethnnational Conflict, 1868–1992* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993) to mention a few from among numerous scholars of Ethiopian history.

387 Haile, *The Building of an Empire*, p.51

Amharic language, the political subjects came from multiple social groups. The colonial state was designed to displace and dismember this Ethiopian empire by creating native authorities based on religious and ethnic lines. Therefore, tribalism was a political and administrative strategic tool in the making of Italian colonial empire in East Africa. It was a strategy to set the clock backwards or to keep it standing still by mobilizing, inventing and enforcing difference by colonial law and governance.

For many scholars, war, resistance and collaboration or colonial developmentalism has dominated the narrative of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. For example, Angelo Del Boca wrote that “unquestionably the network of roads and communications, even though incomplete, helped to speed the development of Ethiopia”. This infrastructural network (unlike that of other colonial regimes) was supplemented by removing the regional lords, leaving only the lowest tier of the system, the village head.³⁸⁸ Both infrastructure construction and the removal of elites intensified the centralization policy of Ḥaylā-Sellasé in the post-war period.³⁸⁹

During the five years, hospitals, hotels, post offices, telephone exchanges, aqueducts, schools and shops were built. New roads were constructed. Italian colonial developmentalism as a mode of rule deployed development discourse and used temples of civilizations, such as infrastructures built in Ethiopia to define the colonized space and native as object. In so doing, it represented the colonizing process as a civilizing mission. However, focusing on how Italy developed Ethiopia’s infrastructural sector and its legacy, little attention has been given to issues such as how Italy ruled Ethiopia during the colonial occupation combining discourses of development, racism and tribalism.³⁹⁰

388 Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War*, p.238.

389 Bahru, *The Modern History of Ethiopia*.

390 For the relevance of this question to post-colonial African states, see Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

Discourse of *śāḷṭane* in the New Era: Negotiated and Reactive Discourse 1941–1974

Addis Zāmān, or new Era for new Ethiopia, was declared after the end of the Italian occupation, following Italy's defeat by the collaborative work of patriots and exiles (with the help of British force), including the emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase. In his speech, emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase affirmed that Myiazya 27 (5 May), the victory day, “heralds a new era for the new Ethiopia”. The day was represented as the renaissance of Ethiopia, with the emperor playing the crucial role. The new era was declared to be one of *śāḷṭane*, and announced as a period of *Nātsanūt* or liberation and national freedom from Italian colonial occupation which was represented as national subjection and slavery comparable to the subjugation of the Israelites in Egypt. Ethiopians having been subjugated for five years under Caesar, the exiled Ḥaylā-Səllasé was characterised as the Ethiopian Moses who led the nation out of slavery. The five-year occupation was also represented as a time of trial and tribulation that had taught Ethiopians the essence of freedom and obedience, hard work and religiosity. In this period, the new *śāḷṭane* is called *zāmānawi śāḷṭane* or modern civilization as opposed to the old, *tintawi śāḷṭane*.

The discourse of *śāḷṭane* and *ləmat* re-emerged in the period. Sustainable national freedom and sovereignty in the 1920s and 30s were a by-product of and justification for the national commitment to progress, civilization and development. In the 1940s, national freedom was considered a necessary condition for *śāḷṭane* and *ləmat*. Such urgency to ensure national sovereignty and freedom was not only a result of Italian occupation but also the British forces' delay in withdrawing from Ethiopian territory. The representation of national freedom as the precondition for the political and economic kingdom linked the Ethiopian discourse of civilization and development to the similar line of argument of anti-colonial resistance against late colonial developmentalism in the rest of Africa. Late colonial developmentalism, though it was a totalizing colonial discourse, was also adopted by the African nationalists as anti-colonial instrument by presenting self-government and independence as a precondition to the economic kingdom. For example, Ghanaian national priority in the

1950s was political, as captured by Kwame Nkrumah's mantra, "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all things shall be added unto you".

The national and foreign policy of Ḥaylā Šəllase's imperial regime's was influenced much by a similar quest to preserve the political kingdom first from Italian occupation and then from British consideration of the country as Occupied Enemy Territorial Administration (OETA) till 1944.³⁹¹ The abolition of slavery was one of the justifications for British interventionist policy in Ethiopia. Similarly, the Horn of Africa was also a victim of colonial tribal mobilization and, therefore, fear of social conflict was also presented as justification for colonial trusteeship administration in Ethiopia.³⁹²

In addition to abolition, de-tribalization was the defining element of the Imperial policy from 1941. Ethiopia's initiative to forge relations with the United States was motivated by this quest for national sovereignty from British ambition. What was at stake after Italy was defeated in the war was restoring the "dismembered" Ethiopia using counter-logic to Italian tribalization, mainly through detribalization by imposing Amharic as the national language. The tribalization mode of colonial rule, therefore, was followed by detribalization while developmentalism from above persisted as part of the ethos of the Ethiopian state.

In the aftermath of the Second World War and the end of the Italian occupation, the discourse of *śəltāne* and *ləmat* was not only a negotiated discourse between global discourse and local sensibility but also a reaction. The discourse of *śəltāne* and *ləmat* addressed the problems created by the five-year occupation. In Ethiopian historiography it was seen as an insignificant moment—for example, Richard Pankhurst wrote about it as "a page of Ethiopian history". The patriots' persistent five-year fight was the explanation for using the concept of occupation. A writer in *Addis Zāmān* maintained that

391 Ḥaylā-Səllasé *Hywäténa Yáityopia Ermija* (Addis Ababa: *Berhanena selam* Ḥaylā-Səllase printing 1956); Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, p.180 and Sterling Joseph Coleman, "No Independence Without Sovereignty! The Resistance of Emperor Ḥaylā Šəllase I to the British Occupation of Ethiopia (1941–1944), *International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies. Aethiopica* 13(2010), pp.46–74.

392 Ḥaylā-səllase, *Hywäténa Yáityopia Ermija*.

it was “impossible” to say that Italy had ruled Ethiopia. It was an occupying rather than colonizing force as evidenced by the short duration and the failure of Italian forces to crush the Ethiopian patriots’ movement. Even so, the Ethiopian state’s ethos and discourse focused on healing the colonial legacy and its politics.

Colonial Legacy and Detribalization: Amharicization and Depoliticization of Religion

After 1941, the Ḥaylā-Sellasé regime attempted to address the legacy of the Italian policy of divide and rule through “tribalism”, which exploited and politicized linguistic and religious differences in Ethiopia, while at the same time retaining developmentalism, which defined the ruled as an object of intervention. This colonial policy position was retrospectively reflected in the first year of publication of the state newspaper *Addis Zāmān*. Asräs Yānēsāw, one of the homespun scholars of twentieth-century Ethiopia, argued that even if the Italian army withdrew, its politics did not.³⁹³ According to Asräs, the iniquity of the colonial historiography is that it was written to divide and to sow the seed of social antagonism among intellectuals in Ethiopia.³⁹⁴ Asräs plausibly affirmed that Italy was only defeated militarily, and that its politics fragmenting Ethiopia persisted. He called for decolonization through detribalizing Ethiopia with local language, mainly Ge’ez.³⁹⁵

Prior to the Italian occupation there had been no consciously planned coherent language policy. Ge’ez continued as an ecclesiastical language, but not as the language of the palace. Chroniclers had begun to write emperors’ chronicles in Amharic since the time of Emperor Tewodros (1855–1868). Amharic persisted as the court language.

Language, however, had been one of the most publicly debated issues before the Italian occupation. Local languages were compared with foreign languages. Local languages such as Amharic and Ge’ez were compared in the debate (other languages of the political minority nationalities were not considered).

393 Asräs, *Tekami Mekir*, p.6

394 See Asräs Yenesew, *Tebé Axum*.

395 Asras Yā-nesaw, *Tebé Axum Mānu Anta and Tekami Mikir*.

There was no consistency in the use of local and foreign languages in official communication or in the creeping expansion of education, which had not been settled before Italy's intervention. The first experiment with modern education was by emperor Mənilək II who, in his palace, taught only Geez besides Ethiopian history, writing and ethics.³⁹⁶ The first government-owned modern school, *Ecole Impériale Mənilək II*, opened in 1908. The teachers were Egyptian and the medium of instruction was French, although students were also taught English, Italian and Amharic. Missionary schools, such as the Swedish Evangelical mission schools in Addis Ababa, combined Amharic and Oromo languages, besides French and English. It was reported that Emperor Mənilək had written: "Everywhere my soldiers are sitting on the ground spelling and reading" after he had distributed Amharic and Oromiffa bibles. As can be seen from Richard Pankhurst's panoramic survey of education before the Italian colonial period, there was no national curriculum or education policy. The public debate on language in the early twentieth century shows that the national language as well as the language of education was undecided. Amharic was only used as a medium of instruction for primary school at national level since 1955, and till then "the imperial government had no coherent strategy. The curriculum was ad hoc and left to teachers who came from different countries with different backgrounds."³⁹⁷

In the 1940s and 1950s the regime followed a policy of expanding Amharic as the official national language. Amharic and English were taught in military training and in other institutions, as well as formally, in schools. At one graduation ceremony of military officers at Holeta Military Academy, Emperor Ḥaylā Sellasé affirmed that "to claim Ethiopianness and not to be able to speak Amharic, is as disgraceful ... as a claim to have no country and to fail to know one's mother and father. If possible it is worth knowing Ge'ez too."

Ḥaylā-Šelasse's religious policy shifted to the consideration of Muslims as legitimate political players. He began to consider

396 Richard Pankhurst, "Language and Education in Ethiopia: Historical Background to the Post-war Period." Unpublished manuscript 1969 IES library 370.9 PAN.

397 Tekeste Negash, *Education in Ethiopia: From Crisis to the Brink of Collapse* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2006), p.8.

building mosques as part of the tradition of rebuilding churches, and he sponsored pilgrimage to Mecca. He also, however, championed the pilgrimage to Jerusalem as a reaction to Italian mobilization of Muslim Ethiopians against the theocratic Christian state.

The ritualistic meeting of heads of the Muslim community with the emperor also occurred after the Italian period. In the meetings the emperor would recall how Christians and Muslims had lived together, practising their religions freely, and how fascist Italy had tried to exploit differences, favoring one religion over the other. “[I]t has been clear for all of us that Italian policy was to oppress like slaves all the races except Italians and Germans.”³⁹⁸ In 1945, he declared that “religion is personal; the state is for all”. By pronouncing the state a collective, and religious identity a private matter, Ḥaylā-Śəllase countered the colonial politicization of religion in Ethiopia. His famous dictum summarizes the religious policy of the restoration period. Retrospectively constructing this policy to the millennial history of Ethiopia, a policy document of the time affirmed that: “Ethiopia has continued to abide by her policy that religion should be kept apart from politics”. Ḥaylā-Sellase highlighted the private aspect of religion with another famous dictum: “The matter of religion pertains to the kingdom of God”. In other words, the political kingdom is secular and collective, whereas the relationship between God and believers is a private affair. However, he maintained the principle of the “elect of God” as king of kings of the “secular” kingdom. It was through him, arguably, that the kingdom of God and the profane kingdom were linked, while religion was prevented from shaping the political subjectivity of the commoners.

Regarding the policy of depoliticizing religion, Gäbrä Heywät Baykädaññ, one of the intellectuals of the early twentieth century, wrote that “religion belongs to conscience and the supernatural king will rule over it, the earthly king doesn’t inspect it”. Elaborating, he used the famous quote “to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, to God what belongs to God”.³⁹⁹ Scholars such as Bahru Zewde considered this prescriptive writing the foundation of Ḥaylā-Śəllase’s policy of

398 AZ ‘yā Ramadan bale akābaber’ Year one no. 24 1934 E.C.

399 Gäbrä Heywät, *Aṣe Mənilək ena Ityopia*, p.22.

depoliticizing religion. This dictum was also said to have delayed the use of Gäbrä Heywät Baykädañ policy recommendation at the beginning of the century,⁴⁰⁰ the emperor having stressed that such intellectual prescription was a reaction to the Italian policy of politicizing religion.

In addition to declaring the state a collective, the regime also provided a secular utopia through the discourse of development. Speaking on the occasion of Ramadan festivity, Ḥaylā-Sellase requested the Muslim community of Ethiopia to work for “*lāmat* of their country, stability of their state and to the unity of the people without being self-centred”. Development therefore continued to be the theology that cemented the unity of the people, transcending religious or national differences. The meeting of the emperor with the elite of the Muslim community became an official ritual during the Muslim holy days, Ramadan and Arafa. On one such occasion, the emperor reaffirmed that the Islamic-Christian binary was the divisive work of the enemy, not of friends. “As you [Muslim representatives] said, we work to stop this division ... All Ethiopians belong to one family.”⁴⁰¹ In paying homage, representatives of Muslims expressed their loyalty to the emperor.

Śālṭane and *lāmat* dominated the state ethos in the 1940s. In the 1950s and 1960s, national unity, peace, brotherhood and security were determined by the spirit of *śālṭane* and *lāmat*. Ḥaylā-Sellase’s policy was to erase the colonial legacy that risked the dismemberment of Ethiopia. To preserve the monarchical political kingdom at any cost was the reaction to the colonial intervention which had interrupted Ethiopia’s march towards progress and *śālṭane*.⁴⁰²

The imperial regime deployed freedom and unity as a precondition for *śālṭane* and *lāmat*, as did the priority of self-government. Prioritizing the security and sustainability of the political kingdom, the Ḥaylā-Sellase regime made use of development discourse to place the emphasis on national and popular sovereignty.

400 Bahru, “The Challenge of the New Millennium”, p.43.

401 *Fré-kānafer zā Qādamwi Ḥaylā Sellasié* vol. 2 Addis Ababa Berhanena Selam Printing 1953, p.860.

402 Emperor Ḥaylā-Sellase’s speech on his birthday *Addis Zāmān* No. 12, 1934.

Amharicization was presented as a solution to linguistic differences. The regime used the depoliticization of religion to transcend religious boundaries. Amharicization and modernization through development planning were the two pillars of the post-1940s Ethiopian state. Other political issues, such as the land question and the call for political reforms towards constitutional monarchy and republic, were marginalized.

The Prophet of Development and Men of Emperor in the Post-Italian Period

The Ḥaylā Səllase regime became more repressive and less tolerant of different political questions and deliberations. Despite the revision of the Constitution introducing adult universal suffrage and the Bill of Rights in 1955, the political space was narrowed and securitized. The vibrant discursive community that wrote and read *Berhanena Sälam* in the 1920s and early 1930s was no longer in existence. The new newspaper *Addis Zāmān* inherited the Italian colonial newspapers, which were the propaganda sites of political cadres serving the regime.

Men of the emperor who supported Ḥaylā Səllase in the pre-occupation period project of reform and transformation became a voice of dissidence in the post-war period, disillusioned by his new style of rule.⁴⁰³ The post-war intellectual generation also produced both opposition and supporters of the regime. Täklä Häwaryat Täklä Maryam, one of the first generation of scholars who supported Ḥaylā-Səllase's coming to power against ləj Iyasu, and chief drafter of the first Constitution in 1931, opposed the regime. In this period, quitting public life, Täklä Häwaryat returned to his private life. His son Gərmachāw Täklä Häwaryat, one of the second generation of scholars, wrote a novel focusing on the life of his father. In the book, *Araya*, Gərmāčāw depicts his father's commitment to civilization and ləmat after he returned from abroad, but he is misunderstood by his own society and the elites of the regime, and decides to

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403 Tekalig Gedamu, *Republicans on the Throne: A Personal Account of Ethiopia's Modernization and Painful Quest for Democracy* (Addis Ababa: Tsehai Publishers 2011), p.85.

pursue a private life⁴⁰⁴ (the novel and the posthumously published autobiography of Täklä Häwaryat are strikingly similar). In another novel, *Ali Habashi: Ethiopian Jandeäräba* (Ali-Habshi the Ethiopian eunuch), written in the 1970s while he was imprisoned by the military regime, Girmachäw documented the production and trade of slaves from Ethiopia to Arabia, using slave characters. One such character, committed to the abolition of slavery and struggling to this end, was probably based on his father's commitment to the abolition of slavery.⁴⁰⁵

Some of the critical forces left the country and wrote letters directly to the emperor as well as books against the Ḥaylä-Sellase regime.⁴⁰⁶ Others, who came from abroad or were educated at home, lost hope for the role of Ḥaylä-Sellase as prophet of development and engaged in protest—from plotting to kill him to the consideration of coup and revolution. Most of these protests adopted civilization and development as justification—for example, in a political statement on national radio the 1960, they stated that “the Ethiopian people did not see any practical developmental programme that can transform ... [the] way of life and now the people are aware [that] even the newly independent African states left Ethiopia behind in their endeavour of progress or *śaltane*.”⁴⁰⁷ Emperor Ḥaylä-Sellase stated: “The programme which the organization of the rebels presented is a copy of what we had started before many years and implementing it devoting our full time.”⁴⁰⁸

Dissident voices, manifested in literary works and, later, the revolution, were reflections of the political degeneration of the Ḥaylä-Sellase regime. According to Bahru Zewde, the progressive Ḥaylä-Sellase of the 1920s and 1930s had become the reactionary

404 Girmachäw Takla-Hawaryat, *Araya* (Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam printing 1939).

405 Girmachäw Takla-Hawaryat, *Ali Habashi: Ethiopian Jandeäräba* (Addis Ababa: Rome Publishers, 1986).

406 Berhanu Dinké *Qesar-na Abyot* and *Bechayén Qomyalw* (I Stand Alone) translated by Tasfu Rafera, Addis Ababa: Itafzar Atamiyoch, 2008).

407 Brhanu Asräs *Man yinagär yänäbärä ... yätahisalu girgir ena mäsäzu*. (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2005), p.189.

408 AZ no. 17, 1953, a translation of the emperor's interview with a Swedish newspaper.

of the 1950s and 1960s. Young Ḥaylā-Sellasé, or *Ras Täfäri*, was progressive in earlier days, according to Bahru, because “progress was a concomitant of his quest for power” and he became reactionary in later days because “clinging to power blocked all paths to progress”.⁴⁰⁹ The opportunist and megalomaniac behaviour of Ḥaylā-Sellasé was the main topic as it shifted from progressive to reactionary. The preoccupation, from the 1940s to 1960s, with political independence, national unity, security and peace, was, according to Bahru, a result of Ḥaylā-Sellasé’s obsession with power.⁴¹⁰ In another article, cutting the colonial intervention out of historical analysis, Bahru writes: “the roots and origins of the post-41 order are to be seen in the pre-35 period”.⁴¹¹

What is lacking, however, is the Italian colonial rule, which was seen as a historical parentheses, a footnote between the time of young and old, the progressive and the reactionary Ḥaylā-Sellasé. Without considering how Italy ruled Ethiopia during the colonial occupation, such shifts cannot be explained only by a behavioral analysis of Ḥaylā-Sellasé. As in other colonial interventions in Africa, but with its own particular nature, how Italy ruled Ethiopia for five years, and how it affected Ethiopian politics since 1941 is yet to be studied. The legacy of the Italian occupation must be taken into account in presenting the genealogy of discourse of state developmentalism and political policy in Ethiopia.

The colonial, political and economic legacy in Ethiopia is manifested on one hand by the reactive policy of the imperial regime to the colonizer and, contrarily, by the ways it retained this legacy—for example, the intensification of Amharicization was a direct reaction to the divide and rule policy of Italy. This likens Ḥaylā-Sellase’s regime to what Mahmood Mamdani describes as African post-colonial radical regimes which “sought to reform” decentralized despotism. The imperial regime, engaged in de-tribalization as

409 Bahru Zewde, “Hayla-Sellase: From Progressive to Reactionary”, in *Ethiopia in Change: Peasantry, Nationalism and Democracy*, edited by Abebe Zegeye and Siegfried Pausewang (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.32.

410 Bahru, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*.

411 Bahru Zewde, “Economic Origins of the Absolutist State in Ethiopia (1916-1935).” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. 17, 1984, pp. 1–29. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41965913 p.11.

de-colonization, transformed the regime like the centralized despotism of post-colonial African states.⁴¹² It was this state that was considered the apex of feudalism articulated through the concept of absolutism.⁴¹³ What Bahru Zewde described as the reactionary Ḥaylā-Sellasé was a product of this reactive policy to heal colonial legacy and colonial intervention focusing on security, national unity and prioritizing the political kingdom while at the same time intensifying the construction of infrastructure which in itself was a legacy of colonial developmentalism. However, while reacting to colonial legacy, the imperial regime had to negotiate with the global development apparatus. The Ethiopian state developmentalism that evolved in the post-Italian period was also a negotiated discourse between global and national.

Conclusion

This chapter has contested the “occupation thesis” which presents Ethiopia’s five-year colonial experience as a less significant episode than it was in reality. By considering the colonial policy of tribalization and the politicization of religion at the core of its analysis, it has briefly depicted the decolonization policy of Ḥaylā Səllasé in the post-Italian period. The politicization of the Amharic language (made the national language) and the de-politicization of religion (declared a private matter) defined this strategy.

The two Ethiopian regimes that followed the Italian colonial administration had pursued centralization. As an antidote, the post-1991 regime re-installed indirect rule in what is known as Ethiopian “ethnic federalism”. as Mamdani presents in his new preface for *Citizen and Subject*.

One could argue, reading this chapter as history of the present, that the colonial mode of rule re-emerged as an answer to revolutionary democratic questions in Ethiopia today, following the failed de-colonization policies. However, the colonial mode of rule, dividing political citizens into native and non-native, failed to provide democratic and progressive solutions. This politics of difference has

412 Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, pp.25-26

413 Addis Hiwot, *Ethiopia, from Autocracy to Revolution*.

conditioned the contemporary discourse of state developmentalism. Arguably, the contemporary Ethiopian regime has used the historic discourse of state developmentalism as an answer to one of the national questions while mirroring colonial indirect rule to answer the democratic question.

This chapter has documented the evolution of colonial developmentalism as an integral part of Ethiopian state developmentalism. I have also discussed how the two developmentalisms evolved in the policies of tribalization and de-tribalization. This history of developmentalisms in Ethiopia appears strikingly similar to the evolution of developmentalism (colonial and post-colonial) in the rest of the continent—as both a mode of colonial rule and a mode of emancipatory and anti-colonial discourse. However, in the post-colonial period development emerged as a new mode of rule that combined nationalist leaders and the apparatus of global development. This new mode of rule attempted to totalize and de-politicize, but failed, because it also became a mode of resistance and survival of the popular and intellectual voice in Ethiopia.

The Intellectuals: The Poetics and Politics of Development (1940s–1970s)

AFTER ETHIOPIA WAS liberated from the short-lived period of Italian colonialism, Ḥaylā Səllase restored his rule, calling this post-Italian period *Addis Zāmān* (a new era).⁴¹⁴ The five-year colonial interlude was considered a rupture in the long history of Ethiopian statehood and Ḥaylā Səllase's return from exile, and the restoration of his power signified the end of it. What remained was to undo its legacy.

Ḥaylā Šəllase invited his people to a new preoccupation. *Šəlaṭane* and *ləmat* as a language of rule continued to connect state and society; now, *addis šəlaṭane* became a novel concept that defined state developmentalism. Ethiopian economic nationalism re-awakened. The concepts of *šəlaṭane* and *ləmat* became ubiquitous in the new creative writing which covered genres such as poetry, fiction and non-fiction, pedagogical texts and philosophy. The discursive tradition that had been interrupted by the Italian colonial intervention resumed. In this tradition no one had had a monopoly on setting the narrative and many had spoken and written about development from different angles. Development discourse united the diverse multitudes, the elites and the emperor. It is in this unity of difference that the poetics and politics of development were enacted.

The national politics of development was influenced by the global discourse of development that came on the scene with the

414 In June 1941, a newspaper was established with this name, *Addis Zāmān* “Yä Addis Zāmān Gazēṭṭa Ajāmāmār”.

signing, in 1941, of the Atlantic Charter between the victors of the Second World War. The end of the war heralded the end of the dichotomy between the colonizers of the sovereign state and the colonized part of the world defined by the absence of sovereignty. A new binary divided the world into the developed and the developing. This binary did not merely define economic disparity. It was a fissure defined temporally (modern and traditional) and spatially (North and South). The colonial link between the two was effected through development intervention and aid.

Ḥaylā Səllase embraced the seemingly new discourse. In 1941, he sent the prominent statesman Yələma Däresa to the US president, Franklin D. Roosevelt; development aid was one of the three core issues Yələma presented to the president. Later, in 1945, Ḥaylā Səllase met Roosevelt; this meeting transformed the bilateral relationship between Ethiopia and the US. The Truman Doctrine became a principle of US foreign relations, aid and intervention-oriented development discourse serving as its pillar. In Ethiopia, it came to be known as Point Four. The two countries officially signed the Point Four Agreements in August 1953.⁴¹⁵

It was instrumental for Ḥaylā Səllase to speak of this emerging powerful international concept called development and to embrace America's dream for Africa and other nations of the global South. It provided an additional site that the Ḥaylā Səllase regime successfully exploited to reproduce its own power and to re-shape the mode of rule using development planning and agricultural transformation.

At home, the same language and concept helped him to re-articulate the Ethiopian *səlaṭane* and *ləmat*. Having exercised a semi-colonial policy over Ethiopia, Britain was reluctant to withdraw from Ethiopia. After assisting Ḥaylā Səllase's return it was keen to loot and dismantle the few industries established by Italian colonial developmentalism. Liberation from British administration, therefore, was part of the new preoccupation of Ḥaylā Səllase, in addition to the development of his country. Another core national issue that Yələma's mission presented to the Americans was the British semi-

415 Amanda Kay Mcvety, "Pursuing Progress: Point Four in Ethiopia," *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 3 (2008), pp.371–403.

colonial policy over Ethiopia.

Haylä Şəllase and his statesmen spoke the language skillfully. Without falling into the emerging East or West camps, they secured finance and technical aid from both. The ten-year industrial programme was introduced with US assistance and the first five-year development plan came from Yugoslavia, anti-colonial struggle being the basis for Ethio-Yugoslav post-war cordial relations. Technical and financial aid became one of the pillars of the new development unfolding in the post-war era.

Planning also became a new element. The first five-year development plan (1957–1962) needed foreign experts. All three development plans (the second 1963–1967 and the third 1968–1973) were prepared from above, in technocratic style. The masses were not considered—development was defined as a technical issue to be managed by experts—and official state developmentalism excluded pre-existing initiatives in the spirit of *şərat*, *şəlaṭane* and *ləmat*. Despite this, the discursive community of *şəlaṭane* represented by the intellectuals continued to debate the future Ethiopia and the nature of Ethiopia's road to *şəlaṭane*. The intellectuals appraised the post-Second World War development discourse using the already evolving rich debate on it.

The idea of progress in places such as Ethiopia was that it was US-led and encountered a tabula rasa space devoid of the thought of advancement. This is the problem with the study of the emergence and re-emergence⁴¹⁶ of development discourse through the conceptual purchase of the notion of “encounter” since the Second World War; in this narrative the people of Africa and other places identified as the “third world” are said to have encountered global development as they had earlier encountered colonialism. It is a narrative that assumes the absence of indigenous ideas of change, progress or improvement. If there was an encounter it had to be between local notions and ideas of progress and post-war global development.

During this period intellectuals advocated for social change and transformation, engaging in debate about the possible road to

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416 Rist, *The History of Development*.

progress. What united them despite their differing ideologies was their commitment and devotion to a transformed Ethiopia. What makes them intellectual was this commitment, “a sense of mission of changing society” and the production of knowledge about their mission through their writings.⁴¹⁷

The dialogue about *śālṭane* and *lāmat* slowly took shape, appearing to be more of a bifurcated discourse of *Awəropawi* vs. *Ityopiawi*: internal vs external, old vs new, spiritual vs material and ecclesiastical vs worldly *śālṭane* or civilization. From the 1940s to the 1970s, it was debated among scholars and university students; it framed the speeches of leaders such as Emperor Ḥaylā Šəllase who dominated the period as the ultimate agent and prophet of *śālṭane* and *lāmat*. The increase in the number of schools and universities, and other temples of civilization such as roads and bridges, affected this binary discourse. In his speech, the emperor asserted and reiterated that Ethiopia had historically been a pioneering civilization but to take its rightful place among peers the country needed modernity.⁴¹⁸

The *Addis Zāmān* newspaper hosted a popular debate on twentieth-century Ethiopia poised between Ethiopian *śālṭane* and European civilization. Indigenous intellectuals compared the popular, vernacular *śālṭane* with Western or *Awəropawi* civilization. In one of the opinion pieces in *Addis Zāmān*, a writer described spiritual virtue, religion, history, heroism and tolerance as elements of Ethiopian *śālṭane*, which had been improving for centuries, defining civilization, development and progress as enhancement rather than change and displacement. Täklä-Maryam Hayle added “communal upbringing and earning, serenity, thoughtfulness, politeness and unity as pure custom” of Ethiopia, in comparison describing Western civilization as devoid of virtue and moral elements.⁴¹⁹ He promoted the idea of a rebirth of local culture and civilization spiritually supplementing biological birth, putting this

417 Bahru Zewde, *Society, State and History: Selected Essays* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2008), p.238.

418 From the imperial speech of Ḥaylā-Šəllase (Addis Ababa: Bərhanəna Sälām Printing).

419 Täklä-Maryam Hailé, *Yägär Bahelna Seltane Ayayaz* (Addis Ababa: Netsanet Printing House, 1859), pp.18– 19.

theory into a poem:

The meaning of home culture

The essence of *śələṭane*

Love and politeness

Unity and collective spirit

A spiritual gift and healing for the flesh

Long live all these, without blemish.⁴²⁰

As in the pre-war era, the conversation emerged from different sites. Historical fictions and poems were produced. *Araya* is a historical fiction by Gərmačāw Täklä Häwaryat, son of one of the emperor's men who returned from Europe in the early twentieth century. In *Araya*, Gərmačāw narrates the story of one of the pioneers of change, most probably basing it on his father's experience, his commitment to change Ethiopia and the frustration he encountered through the unwelcoming political system and cultural alterity. It was the usual encounter of educated intellectuals on their return. *Təbābä Šəllase: Ləbwäläd Tarik* (Wisdom of trinity: a historical fiction) by Mäzgäbu Abatä, one of the emperor's followers, was more optimistic. It is about a young shepherd from rural Ethiopia who becomes a student, first in Addis Ababa and then in Europe. On his return, he becomes minister of war and uses his technological skills to organize the building of a shipyard under the supervision of the emperor. The book uses interrelated concepts such as *śələṭane* and *ləmat, ədgät bələşigəna*, the biblical saying that Ethiopia stretches her hand unto God rewritten as a developmental motto: "Today Ethiopia stretches her hand unto ... *śələṭane*".⁴²¹

Religiosity continued to influence the framing of the development narrative. In this poetic and pedagogical book, Mäzgäbu also urges the Ethiopian youth to read and apply the recommendation in Kebede Mikael's work *How Japan Civilized* to emulate Japan in order to catch up with Europe. Hərüy Wäldä-Šəllase is one of the earliest of those labelled "Japaniser" or "young Ethiopians", "progressive intellectual" and "the guardians of tradition", prolific writers and members of the Ethiopian discursive tradition—he

420 Translation by the author.

421 Mäzgäbu Abatä, *Təbābä Šəllase Ləbwäläd Tarik*, 1948, p.166.

actually travelled to Japan and wrote a travel narrative *Mahādara Bərhan Hāgärä Japan* (Japan the home of light).⁴²²

Gazing at Japan continued in the post-war period. Hərüy's writing and his reformist intent also influenced most of the post-war intellectuals, notably Käbbädä Michael, Gərmačäw Täklä Häwaryat and Mäkonnen Əndalkachwe.⁴²³ For example, Gərmačäw's main character, Araya, who returned from France, could be compared to Awäqä, a prominent character in Hərüy's book *Addis Alām: Yä Qənočənnä yädägg Adəragiwoč Mānorəya* (New world: the home for the meek and righteous) published in 1925 E.C. Like Araya, Awäqä was educated in France with a mission to reform his community, and he succeeded in causing social transformation. Hərüy's optimistic work was a predictive view, written in the 1920s euphoria, whereas Gərmačäw's *Araya* was a retrospective narrative of the life and works of the pioneers and the first generation intellectuals whose work to reform Ethiopia was interrupted by the Italian interlude. Mäzgäbu's *Təbäbä Šəllase* could be seen as optimistically predicting the success of the reformist intellectuals of post-war Ethiopia. Many other books, mainly fictional, imagined a utopian future in Ethiopia. Of these, Täklä Maryam Fantayé's (1959) *Amsalä Gänät* and Abé Gubännä's (1964) *Mäləkəam: Säyafä-näbäləbak* are worth mentioning. *Amsalä Gänät* is an imagined history of what *šələtəne* and *ləmat* mean at local level, a poetic depiction of how development can be made people-centred. In the book, the people are the owners and agents of progressive vision. Written in the age of top-down state developmentalism, the book offers an alternative road to advancement in the country.

In *Mäləkəam*, Abé writes of an imaginary nation with an elected, democratic and popular prime minister. The story begins with the burial ceremony of this benevolent man, who had been poisoned to death before he fulfilled his developmental programmes, but

422 Bahru Zewde, "The Concept of Japanisation in the Intellectual History of Modern Ethiopia, in *Society, State and History: Selected Essays* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2008), pp.199–214.

423 Molvaer Reidulf Knut *Tradition and Change in Ethiopia: Social and Cultural life reflected in Amharic Fictional Literature ca. 1930–1974* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).

the book is more about developmental vision and the difficulty of realising dreams. The reforms of the prime minister, who came from a humble family, range from land reform to political and economic reforms including industrialization, dam construction, collective and mechanised farming, heavy industries, land nationalization and distribution as well as reform in the justice and finance systems depicted as a glorious achievement. The poetic discussion of national policies covers both the national and foreign policies of the imagined nation, *Bétélfaos*. It reiterates that development is impossible without democratic governance and an orderly political system. In the book, Abe criticizes both the political elite and the masses, saying that the “wickedness of the masses produce only tyrannical rule”.⁴²⁴ On one hand, the book shows the need for democratic leadership but on the other hand it warns of the danger of uncontrolled democracy and freedom. The book is written with the aim of prescription and prophecy, a common genre in the Ethiopian discursive tradition.

In selecting some representative texts I have chosen intellectuals and their work based on their conceptualisation of *śaləṭane* and *ləmat*, understanding of the problems of their country and the prescriptions they put into their writing. The first intellectual is the prolific author and bold advocate of change, Ḥaddis Alāmayāhu, with his poetic tale and the memo written to Ḥaylā Śəllase I following the 1960 aborted coup. I consider three other intellectuals, Asräs Yāne säw, Kābbädä Mika’el and Əgualä Gäbrä Yoḥannəs, and create a conversation between their works in which they grappled with questions such as the nature of *śaləṭane*, how Ethiopia’s *śaləṭane* is different from the European and Japanese civilisations and, above all, what must be done to awaken Ethiopia’s progress. They represent a school of thought within the Ethiopian discursive tradition that debated Ethiopia’s transformation.

Asräs’s works are a vernacular articulation of the age-old Ethiopian idea of progress, while Kābbädä Mika’el’s works read as an attempt to localize Western civilisation, a universal modernity that Ethiopia should emulate. Kābbädä may represent these reformist

424 Abé Gubānna’s Mäləkəam: Sāyəfä-nābälə. Addis Ababa, 1964.

intellectuals—mainly the Japanisers of the post-war period—and the bold critical writing of indigenous scholars. The best-known of them was Asräs Yäne säw, who wrote about *śələṭane* and *ləmat* but represents the indigenous intellectuals who, other than Messay Kebede, did not often receive the attention of historians.

Asräs and Kābbädä are at the two extreme poles of the discourse of development at the time: the embrace and emulation of Europe of Kābbädä on one side, and the return to the source and the past to reclaim the future from Asras, on the other. The two scholars appear to have been contemporaries and their works spoke to each other. Their prescriptions were mediated by Əgualä's work prescribing negotiation and synthesis between Ethiopian *śələṭane* and European civilization. The conversation between this trio of intellectuals, I believe, represent the debate within the Ethiopian discursive tradition which began by mobilizing *Fəkkare İyäsus* to articulate social and political change in modern Ethiopia, reached its peak in the early twentieth century and continued expanding in the period between the Italian occupation and the Ethiopian revolution. The three intellectuals at least indicate the contour lines of the debate in the post-war period.

Ḥaddis Alämayähu: Decolonizing and Democratizing Development

Ḥaddis Alämayähu was an Ethiopian literary giant and technocrat—a writer, a patriot who fought against Italy and a statesman who served his country, inter alia as an ambassador and in ministerial positions in the post-war period. Ḥaddis wrote plays, fables, novels and a prescriptive book entitled *İtyopia mən Ayənät Astädadär Yasfälləgatal* (What kind of political system does Ethiopia need?) published in 1974 (the idea had already been submitted to the emperor as a reformist memorandum in the immediate aftermath of the 1960s coup d'état).⁴²⁵ He also wrote about *śələṭane* in his storybook *Tärät Tärät yämäsärät*. The prescriptive memo suggests democratization while the fable articulates the decolonialization of development.

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⁴²⁵ See Tekalign, *Republicans on the Throne*, pp.118–119.

The Italian occupation of Ethiopia must have inspired the fable while the 1960s abortive coup against Ḥaylā Səllase conditioned the prescriptive memo which later turned into a book—evidence that political events can lead to inspiring political ideals and theories.

One of the fables in *Tārāt Tārāt Yāmäsārāt* is about colonialism, colonial violence and decolonization: the free states of cats and rats, in two locations separated by a sea, become colonizer and colonized when the kingdom of rats encounters the colonizing force of cats. After rats receive a visiting force of cats hospitably, it ends with the signing of a treaty by which cats become civilizing agents. Rats are represented as backward and uncivilized, the ancient ancestors of cats who would have developed into cats had it not been for their historical stagnation. The fable highlights the division of the world into traditional and modern, civilized and barbarian—justification for colonialism in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century and development intervention in the post-war world. It is a polemical representation of Western intervention and expansion. The intervention of cats was needed to bring rats into the present by initiating social evolution. Rats were colonized, dominated and exploited by cats, until a new generation of rats found a way to defend their community. They made tiny tunnels that cats would be unable to enter. The army of cats lost their colony, and rats were able to live peacefully in their holes. The tale linked colonial history to *śələṭane* for Ethiopian children reading Amharic. The moral of the story is to overcome colonization while at the same time it decries the teleological idea of progress. Ḥaddis was seemingly criticizing emulation and the catching-up propagated by the global discourse of development and embraced by African leaders and scholars of modernization theory.

The prescriptive memo submitted to the emperor in the aftermath of the coup expressed his disapproval of development without political reform and democratization. In the memo, Ḥaddis pointed out the deficit of democracy and self-administration in Ethiopia despite the impressive progress made in the realm of politics during the Ḥaylā-Selassie period; the level of people's freedom, their participation in governance and self-administration

was disappointing when compared to other countries, and he gave as an example the nominal power of the parliament against the omnipotence of the emperor which, he commented, made Ethiopia a medieval kingdom. Without political reform Ethiopia's progress would be constrained.

Ethiopia's *lāmat* is linked to the nature of its political system; the progress of development always depends on the nature of the political system and governance. Accordingly, Ḥaddis argued that Ethiopia's development could be seen from two perspectives. The first compared Ethiopia's progress in the period of Ḥaylā Šəllase with preceding periods, showing the remarkable achievement in the later period. The second indicated that had the political system's leadership and administrative quality improved, the achievement could have been far better. This means that the political system arrested the progress of development. Ḥaddis considered political development as not only part of material development but an enabling condition for it. It was this lack that Abé showed in *Mäləkəam*. The prime minister in the book symbolised the product of an imagined political reform to unfold in Ethiopia.

Another important issue Ḥaddis brought to the palace was the multi-ethnic nature of Ethiopia as a political community. Despite the social ties and unity of the monarchy and the army, Ethiopians were divided. There was no uniting factor to bond these diverse people. The goals of life also varied among Ethiopians—some felt superior and competed with one another for domination; others, with feelings of victimhood, aspired to overcome this historical condition. As there were no political institutions to unite the people one could not say that the existing political system was mature. There was no condition for the people of Ethiopia to choose a new leader in the absence of an existing one.

Ethiopia was far behind in this type of high politics. It was Gäbrä Hywot who raised the issue in the pre-war period and Ḥaddis boldly brought the self-administration and nation-building issues to the public. The question of nationality and the weak nation-building process was already felt among intellectuals of the time. This became an agenda of the Ethiopian student movement and then the Ethiopian

social revolution that erupted in 1974. The post-war intellectuals' role in popularising such political issues before the arrival of Marxism to Ethiopia is worth noting.

Ḥaddis stated that the Ethiopian economy was at a lower level than that of other newly-independent African states. This became a source of dissatisfaction among literate and illiterate Ethiopians alike—that backwardness resulted from the leadership of the country that prioritized its personal gain over the collective interest of the nation. Ethiopia's survival as an independent and free nation was always compared with its economic backwardness in Ḥaddis's analyses. He underlined the need for freedom of speech and thought and the urgent need for political reform towards a new Constitution, constitutional monarchy, electoral politics and a programmatic politics in general. He called for democratic transition as an immediate solution to the problem that the 1960 coup had exposed. Like many prescriptive writings of the time, however, his recommendations were not taken seriously by the emperor.

Käbbädä Michael: Localizing Western Civilization through a Strong State

Most of Käbbädä's works are written from a certain ideological stance; they can be considered a continuation of Afäwärq Gäbrä-Iyäsus, Gäbrä-Həywät Baykädañ and Həruy Wäldä Šəllase's poetic and political writings. They cover the history and philosophy of Europe. Käbbädä's mission was to inspire young Ethiopians—what other purpose could he have, in writing *Tallalaq Säwočč* (Great men), a book about eminent European men from ancient to modern times? The list includes renowned philosophers, literary giants and prodigious painters.

He wrote other books of pedagogical and moralistic value, including earlier works such as *Tarikənnə Messale* Books I, II and III, and children's books of short stories and poems published in the pre-war period. His three books *Yäqəne Azəmāra* (Poetic Harvest), *Kalēb* and *YäTənbət Kätəro* (The Prophetic Appointment) are about morality and Christian heritage. *Kalēb* is a historical play, retrospectively constructing the glory of the emperor Kaleb, Ethiopian ruler in

Axum and known for his sixth-century campaign to Arabia to rescue Christians. In the preface, Kābbādā pointed to a similarity between Axum and Constantinople, and how Constantinople had declined whereas Ethiopia had survived its challenges.

In *YäTänbit Qätäro*, Kābbādā represents the struggle between pagan and Christian, and uses drama to depict the victory of Christianity. The main character in *YäTänbit Qätäro* is a boy of humble origin marrying the daughter of a pagan king. Conversion of the nation follows. Prophecy is a core genre and mode of the Ethiopian discursive discourse. Both pre-modern documents, *Fəkkare Iyäsus* and *Kəbrä Nəgäst* predict an optimistic future and utopia yet to unfold.

YäTänbit Qätäro can be considered the *Ṭobyä* of post-war Ethiopia. Both books, like *Fəkkare Iyäsus* and *Kəbrä Nəgäst*, consider the future as a time when Ethiopia's glory unfolds. Written in the early 1940s, it was used by the author to predict the revival of Ethiopian independence after defeating the pagan, represented by Italian colonial power. What Ethiopia inherits is, perhaps, material civilisation, something that Christian Ethiopia will learn from the West.

Among the works of Kābbādā, four books were about *śələtane*: *Japan Əndāmən Säləttänäčč* (How Japan civilized), *Śələtane Məndan-nänäč* (What is civilisation?), *Yä Śələtane Ayär* (The wind of civilisation) and *Ityopya Məəhrabawi Śələtane* (Ethiopian and Western civilization) a trilingual book in one volume, published in 1948, in which Kābbādā wrote about the history of civilization, state formation and slavery, and the abolition discourse. These works render him an Ethiopian pioneer in conceptual history. His two books on *śələtane*, and his attempt to theorize the concept, can be used as a foundation for the re-thinking of conceptual and intellectual history as part of Ethiopian national modernity, analagous to the conceptual history projects of Germany, Britain and America.⁴²⁶

In *Yä Śələtane Ayär* Kābbādā located the pillars of universal civilization in the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, in the law and governance of Rome and in Christianity. He argued that civilization

426 João Feres Jr, "For a Critical Conceptual History of Brazil: Receiving Begriffsgeschichte," *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 2005), pp.185–200 (New York: Berghahn Books)..

is religion to Christians; love, compassion and generosity to Gandhi; war to Bismarck or Hitler; it is wealth and business to Americans and imperialism and colonialism to Britain, France and Germany; it is science and materialism to Russia. Kābbādā also divided civilization into the material civilization of the West and the spiritual civilization of the East; conservative materialism the blind spot of modern Western civilization and conservative spiritualism the weakness of Eastern civilization—as Kābbādā exemplified by focusing on the thoughts of Gandhi in *Śaləṭane Məndən-näč*. He exposed how Western civilisation produced war, racism, colonialism and the injustice exemplified by the League of Nations verdict during the Ethio-Italian war. Kābbādā hoped, in *Śaləṭane Məndən-näč*, for harmony between the spirituality of Gandhi and the materialism and science of the modern West.

In *Japan Əndāmən Säləṭṭänäčč*, Kābbādā, subscribing to the spiritual and material binary discourse, represented the history of Western civilization through a biographical story of Goethe's character Faust who had become old and weak after spending his life pursuing knowledge and wisdom. In the story, it was through the intervention of Mephistopheles's sorcery, on the verge of his death, that Faust became young and energetic again, appreciating the beauty of life on earth. The young Faust represented the modern period while industrialization was the modern sorcery that transformed an ancient civilization into new.⁴²⁷ Kābbādā also framed his narrative to represent modern Ethiopian history as Ethiopia's encounter with the civilization of the West, best signified by his book *Ityopyanna Məəhrabawi Śaləṭane*.

Kābbādā recommended education and industrialization as the modern sorcery to transform Ethiopia. In *Japan Əndāmən Säləṭṭänäčč*, he underlined the role of planning. He was writing this in the 1950s, when development had become the universal language and Truman's doctrine the manifesto of this development discourse, Point Four becoming an institutional expression of it in Ethiopia. Kābbādā reproduced this universal discourse of development as

427 Kābbādā, *Japan Əndāmən Säləṭṭänäč* [1954 original] (Addis Ababa: Mega Publishing, 1994), pp.1–2.

planning and technical endeavour, and the national priority.⁴²⁸ In elaborating, Kābbädä provided a comparative example from the Japanese “planning commission.” In so doing, he endorsed the pre-war Japanisers such as Gäbrä-Həywät and Həruy who had advocated emulation of Japan to catch up with the West.

One of the conditions for the development of Ethiopia, according to Kābbädä, was to make Ethiopians the owners and managers of wealth and wealth creation, otherwise political independence would be in name only. Ethiopians should go to Europe and learn modern *śəlaṭane* or else they would be secondary citizens in their own country. Political independence was implemented through self-reliance. As in the preceding period, Kābbädä argued that the achievement of *śəlaṭane* guaranteed Ethiopia’s political survival in the face of the big powers. *Śəlaṭane*, for Kābbädä, was the basis of dignity, and also a space to disprove the racist assumption in the discourse in which black people were considered incapable of taking part in industry, medicine and engineering. The only way to disprove this assumption was through the practical realization of *śəlaṭane*; the only way to deconstruct the spatial and temporal rupture of the Western gaze and discourse was through catching up with its material advancement. Nevertheless, Kābbädä affirmed that “it is white people who can teach us the wisdom of *śəlaṭane*,” and “we shall own and manage the project of *śəlaṭane*, though we learn it from the whites”,⁴²⁹ He embraced Europe as the origin of modern civilization while suggesting the need for localization. For Kābbädä, *śəlaṭane* originated in the West; it became universal, and its particularity at the local level was defined not by content but by agency and ownership.

Universal *śəlaṭane* and its agency is the defining element of Kābbädä’s work. A shining example was that of Japan which embraced the universal *śəlaṭane* by creating its own nationalist civilizing social groups. The founding of a nationalist bourgeoisie (in Marxian terms), loyal to the state, was a necessary pre-condition for

428 Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

429 Kābbädä, *Japan* Əndāmən Sälätänäch, p.7

state developmentalism, as there could be no state developmentalism if the middle class took “the role of comprador—the historic mission to serve a colonial bourgeoisie”.⁴³⁰ According to Kābbädä, ownership of the project of *śālātane* by the native, accompanied by the patriotism of the native middle class and their loyalty to the emperor (as exhibited in Japan’s case) was important to successfully achieve *śālātane* in Ethiopia.

Japan was presented as a model for Ethiopia because of the historical similarity between the two countries as in the closed-door policy the two adopted in the pre-modern period. Moreover, unlike the gradual process of European civilization, the Japanese model was imposed from above by the king and the state and was achieved within a short period. State developmentalism, according to Kābbädä, was the secret of Japanese’s miracle. The relationship in Japan between the emperor and the people was marked by extreme loyalty and respect. The intervention of the state was necessary because Japan’s wealthy nobility had no technical expertise in industry or knowledge of international business. The extermination of feudal forces had been necessary in Japan to address the land question and the centralization of power in the hands of the emperor.

Kābbädä subscribed to the developed-underdeveloped division in which the West was portrayed as civilized but poor in endowment and countries such as Ethiopia were rich in endowment and poor in modern civilization. Sophisticated peoples colonized the poor to achieve riches, but Ethiopia had no need to do so because of its plentiful resources. Kābbädä imagined the possibility of progress without colonizing others or being colonized—Ethiopia could achieve *śālātane* peacefully, without conflict. He recommended planning, prioritizing industry and education, and harmony between state and society. National planning was the defining element and dominant representation of the development discourse and in the 1950s the first and the second national development plans of Ethiopia were launched. Installing the Amharic language as the national medium of instruction was also considered important to meaningful

⁴³⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.122.

articulation and the localization of the transformation process.

In a conceptual study of *śaləṭane* in his book *Śaləṭane Məndən-nānāč*, Kābbädä argued that an idea is like a spirit that can be captured and made material through its physical representations, concepts and words. The universal idea can appear particular through its embodiment and through the physical manifestation of concepts and local language; the translation of universal ideas into a local language particularizes its history, analagous to the major argument in Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing of Europe Through Translation*. This was best articulated in Kābbädä's *Japan Əndämen Säləṭṭänäčč*. Like the previous Japanizers or the first generation Ethiopian scholars, Kābbädä also upheld the idea of Japan as the elaborative historical site to depict the successful achievement of progress without compromising the sovereignty or the political kingdom. In discussing the history of Japan, despite appreciating the end of the nobility and the distribution of land to the masses, he did not overtly pronounce on the need to address the land question in Ethiopia that had been discussed in Gäbrä Heywät's works and also in *Berhanena Sälam* in the 1920s and 1930s. It was, however, in his book *Śaləṭane Məndən nāčč* that Kābbädä presented the most elaborate and rigorously researched discussion of civilization and development, focusing on the concept of *śaləṭane* and the ideas it signified. He presented the conceptual discussion in a debate with a broad review of classic and modern Western writers from Socrates to Nietzsche in comparison with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, and depicted the glory and also the pitfalls of Western civilization in comparison to Eastern or Indian. The major fault of this book, however, is that his philosophy disregarded the local debate over *śaləṭane* in the preceding period. The central pillar of his view was the possibility of localizing Western universal civilization using Ethiopian language and discursive tradition—he seemingly aspired to write the history of universal civilization on the *tabula rasa* of Ethiopian parchment and language.

This *tabula rasa* of blank Ethiopian parchment, yet to be filled by Western modernity, appears similar to the empty linear time that best describes Western historicism. Kābbädä considered the

empty time-frame, empty parchment and empty language as a tool to conceptualize, articulate, embody and localize Western civilization. James De Lorenzo writes, convincingly, that “since Kābbādä’s world history was defined by the evolution of Western civilization, Ethiopia and Africa were combatively marginal actors...”.⁴³¹ According to Kābbādä, it was Haylä Šəllase who had been trying to place Ethiopia at the centre of global progressive civilization. Kābbādä was preoccupied with the localization of the universal discourse of progress. De Lorenzi began his chapter *The Triumph of Historicism* in the post-Italian period with the intellectual contribution of Kābbādä.⁴³² He promoted the idea that emulating the European way of progress would put Ethiopia in the right place in the universal history of development and civilization. Asräs attempted to bring to the table the creative power of ancient Ethiopian civilization whereas Kābbādä promoted the adoption of European ways to awaken Ethiopia’s potential for progress. With hindsight, one could locate Kābbādä’s work not with the return-to-the-source scholars but with intellectuals like Samir Amin and Thandika Mkandawire, inspired by the strong developmental state. His works can be seen as links between the contemporary discourses of state developmentalism in Ethiopia as advocated by Meles Zenawi and the early twentieth-century Ethiopian scholars such as Gäbrä Heywät Baykādañ who promoted the strong state as the midwife of development.

Asräs Yäne säw: Return to the Source as a Way to Šələtane

Asräs Yäne säw was one of the group of Afrocentric scholars who condemned colonial social science and its claim that the “dark continent” had no history. *Təbe Axum Mānu Antä* (Who are you? Let Axum speak) and *Tākami Məkr* (Useful advice) are two books that take Ethiopia’s progress seriously. In 1962, when the library of Ḥaylä Sellasé I University opened, it received its first book, *Tebe Aksum, Mānu Antä* from Asräs Yäne säw who, in this work, asked the challenging question “who are you?”. The work suggests returning to Ge’ez as a way to self-identification and progress. His works

⁴³¹ De Lorenzi, *Guardians of the Tradition*, p.115.

⁴³² Op. cit., p.114.

can be read as historiographical critique, postcolonial theory and Afrocentric modernity.

Asräs's writings, primarily historiographical, were intended as a counter to Italian representation of Ethiopian history before the twentieth century and during the Italian colonial period. He was also critical of European writing on Ethiopia, especially its reproduction of the Hamitic hypothesis. He understood that historical knowledge production is a political process and has an influence on national and translation politics. Rejecting this historiography, Asräs Africanized ancient Ethiopian civilization and suggested that the future should be based on the past. In the 1951 book *Yä-Kam Mätasäbya* Asräs criticized the Hamitic thesis that propagates Ethiopian ancient civilization, including Ethiopic scripts that originated outside of Africa.⁴³³ Coming from an indigenous site of knowledge—and against the prescription of Western language and education as a panacea for the material predicament of Ethiopia—he valorised local knowledge and condemned Western epistemology and the politics of knowledge. In this vein he was very critical of the idea that Europe could be a source of science and technology for Ethiopia. *Täkami Məkr* was a book Asräs wrote to address the new generation of Africa in general and of Ethiopia in particular. Amílcar Cabral's "return to the source", as Messay Käbbädä puts it, can best describe the orientation of the book.⁴³⁴ Asräs' prescription to return to source did not however aim to mobilize culture, as Cabral's did. Cabral's focus on culture emanated from his understanding that colonialism had an element of cultural oppression. For Cabral, "if imperialist domination has the vital need to practise cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of *culture*."⁴³⁵ Asräs observed the destruction of craft and the distortion of history as well as the romanticization of Westernization in Ethiopia in his time and therefore suggested a return to the Ge'ez language as a counter to progress. Asräs considered Ge'ez to possess

433 Asräs, *Yä-kam Metasbya* Sddis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Printing, 1951.

434 Messay, "Return to the Source: AsresYenesew and the West".

435 Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture." In *Return to the Source; Selected Speeches by Amílcar Cabral*. Edited by Africa Information Service (New York and London: Monthly Review Press).

ancient wisdom similar to gnosis or a sacred knowledge as described by Valentine Mudimbe in his seminal work.⁴³⁶ His value of language is not merely a search for a national language but a means of self-discovery to put the collective self in the right place of universal civilisation. His idea about language and progress is strikingly similar to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's articulation that "language carries culture and culture carries ... the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world."⁴³⁷

Asräs saw language as a home of history and knowledge, including technical skills. The ongoing Westernization and displacement of Ethiopian languages, mainly of Ge'ez, was a form of oppression for him, combining cultural alienation and material dispossession, and a major cause of Ethiopia's material lag. Asräs gave high place to literature and authorship in the politics of knowledge production for any society. "[A]n author is like the watchman of an army. Without him, the army would fall prey to the enemy." A society without literature "is like a bee that couldn't find a flower. As a bee cannot make honey without flowers, how can a people without an author find knowledge, wisdom and improvement?" Among the post-war scholars in 1960s Ethiopia, mainly Asräs and Kābbädä, literature was considered a foundation to *śəlaṭane* and *ləmat*. Literature, art, concepts and language are physical embodiments of an idea, which is the abstract, or spiritual—to use Kābbäda's binary of idea and concept, spirit and physical manifestation.⁴³⁸ The foundation of improvement is knowledge and knowledge production in which the author plays a central role. Like Gäbrä Heywät's, Asräs's works give knowledge production a prominent place in the conceptualization of progress or development. Kābbädä was also promoting the same idea arguing that without literature, there is no *śəlaṭane*.

One of Asräs's major preoccupations was telling the new generation that a knowledge of foreign language would not provide a

436 Valentine Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (London and Indianapolis: James Curry and Indiana University Press, 1988).

437 Ngugi wa Thiong'o *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1987), p.16.

438 Kābbädä, *Śəlaṭane Məndən Nečč?*.

livelihood for all youth. Like Amílcar Cabral's conception of cultural oppression as an aspect of the colonial domination of the material mode of production, Asräs's was that language-based domination led to alienation from the self and history, and that language is an aspect of self. Asräs told how studying the ancient language Ge'ez can lead to the rediscovery of the self and achieve progress and wealth. Ge'ez, for Asräs, was not an empty language. He conceptualized it as a storehouse of knowledge pertaining to history, geography, and biology—in general, the ancient great civilization of Axum which was personified in his work to signify Africans' collective self as the descendants of Kush.

For Kābbādā, the mere utilization of the parchment and the local language by Ethiopian agents in order to write Western knowledge was the localization of Western civilization. For Asräs, language was not just the medium of expression but a storehouse of local civilization and knowledge and the reclamation of the disappearing African self. Asräs was writing in the post-Italian occupation period of the 1960s, and argued that Italy was defeated in a war but not in the political sense. "Though the Italian troops have withdrawn from Ethiopia, their politics still exists";⁴³⁹ the knowledge the Italians produced still persisted and was being reproduced. Asräs, quoting Alexander, argued "the ink and sword rule or govern the world". Italy was defeated by the sword but its inks that produced knowledge survived in its books. His preoccupation in writing the two books, therefore, was an attempt to defeat the politics and the knowledge produced, and being reproduced, through colonial intervention.

Asräs's return to the source was to realize the collective march to the future, defeating the colonial legacy of politics and knowledge. He pointed out that the period of occupation was not just Ajayi's "parenthesis" in which little had happened. The colonization of knowledge production and the nature of politics was the legacy of the occupation and other forms of foreign intervention. Like Ḥaddis, Asräs stressed the urgent need to decolonize. Studying Ge'ez was consistent with decolonization and the erasure of the colonial legacy.

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439 Asräs, *Tākami Məkar*, p.11.

The rebirth of the Ge'ez *śālṭane* should accompany the victory in the battlefield. A true political triumph would unfold when Ge'ez *śālṭane* was part of progress in Ethiopia.

Asräs criticized the romanticization of Western language while at the same time he also condemned the tendency to belittle Ge'ez. He rejected the representation of Ge'ez scholarship as *yākes tāmāhərt*, “church education or an education of clerics.” The cost to Ethiopia was the loss of its age-old indigenous manufacturing and the imporation of foreign goods—and the large number of foreign teachers who were replacing as local teachers. He maintained that “to be educated means primarily to know well the language of the motherland”. Local language was important to Kābbādä for translating Western civilization; for Asräs it was a means of reconnecting with the past and lost self as a precondition for Western civilization.

Presenting civilization and development as, both spiritual and material, Asräs acknowledged that Ethiopia had been left behind in terms of *bä-śəgawi 'əbāb* (worldly wisdom). Like Kābbādä, he believed in Ethiopia's supremacy in spiritual civilization.

Täbe-Axum was a reaction to the Roman misrepresentation of Ethiopia, specifically to a book entitled *Yä Ityopia Tarik* or *History of Ethiopia* by Father Gasperini Gabra Maryam, a Portuguese priest. For Asräs, *History of Ethiopia* was a political instrument to silence and downgrade Ethiopian history, and was full of unfounded assumptions and interpretations. The book describes Roman Catholic attempts to dominate the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Writing history, dividing the Ethiopian elite, preaching and providing gifts were some of the strategies to control Ethiopia.

In addition to Ge'ez, Ethiopia's *śālṭane* was defined by its political survival. For Asräs, Ethiopia had been the land of God since the era of Kam, did not need to change either its flag or its scripts, which had survived for four thousand and eighty-nine years. The ancient history of the political kingdom was considered in his work as also the basis for *śālṭane*.

Asräs believed that Europe would never share its knowledge with Ethiopia. “Dear Ethiopian children hoping Europe would train you in the secret of science, you have been flying in thousands to

abroad, the cost of establishing schools at home and payment for foreign schools goes beyond millions, but we don't find even ten Ethiopian youth who are trained in the secret of science."⁴⁴⁰ Asräs suggested that although Ethiopians should study European civilization priority should be given to understanding the age-old indigenous civilization embedded in Ge'ez to find the way to science. Change and progress would come slowly without forgetting the ancient civilization embedded in Ge'ez literature and language. Asräs discussed, for example, how making ink had been an age-old craft in Ethiopia, and how it had been disappearing because of the importation of ink from abroad. A 3,000-year tradition of perfume making had been lost. He regretted that the age-old wisdom and traditions were disappearing, and blamed modernization or Westernization trends, advising the reading of Ge'ez scripts to recall the knowledge of perfume making and to renew the ancient factories. With regret, Asräs wrote: "there is no one to renew the first perfume factory in the world. The plants and barks are disappearing while foreigners are looting Ethiopia's wealth voraciously."⁴⁴¹ He stood against the universalization of the West by writers such as Käbbädä Mikael and others who defined *śālṭane* as modernization or Westernization through local agency and the local language, Amharic. For Asräs, the romanticization of Amharic and belittlement of Ge'ez was not commendable. Forgetting Ge'ez meant burying the wealth of Ethiopia.

One of the features of Ge'ez *śālṭane*, according to Asräs was its African origin. He condemned the exceptionalism of Ethiopia and asked why Ethiopians distanced themselves from other Africans when they were abroad. He criticised brown-complexioned people for stereotyping those with dark skin: "Are you imagining yourself as the second *ferenj* (white man), if you are, you are putting all Ethiopians at the feet of the white man." He described all Ethiopians as children of Kam — and the rest of Africa too. His advice was to follow an open-door policy towards welcoming people from other African countries and even suggested giving them land when they came as a basis for unity against Europeans and towards the re-establishment

440 Op. cit., p.41.

441 Op. cit., p.24.

of the ancient political kingdom of Kusa or Kam. He reconstructed African history using Biblical stories and argued that Kam came to Africa with three children: Misraye remained in Egypt, Fute in Lybia and Kusa in the rest of Africa. Kusa, who was the most powerful and the wealthiest, was now is disunited and weakened, separated and disunited, and the way to the past was a critical study of Ge'ez. Asräs and his scholarly work appealed to the indigenous historians and scholars elsewhere in providing an alternative narrative and methodological use of the biblical stories. With the exception of a few scholars who have recently begun to engage in his work, Asräs has not been taken seriously in Ethiopian historiography.⁴⁴²

Asräs is a good example, to use Grant Farred's concept, of a vernacular intellectual who translates the popular and critical stance against the valorization of modernization and Westernization as panacea for Ethiopia's predicament. Asräs urged us to reconsider the return to Ge'ez, a storehouse of spiritual as well as material knowledge of Ethiopian *śālṭane*. He articulated in intellectual language the ancient wisdom as basis for progress of Africa and prescribed Ge'ez as the Africanization of the discourse and practice of development. His work can be read parallel with the Afrocentric and black intellectual tradition.

፲፩፻፩ ገጃብራ-ዮሐንስ: Towards Bä-Tāwahādo Yä-käbäräl (Enriched with Synthesis)

፲፩፻፩ ገጃብራ-ዮሐንስ, one of the Western-educated scholars of the second generation, articulates the concept of *śālṭane*, comparing local usage with Western. He argues: "If we had a concept to lend to European languages, it should be the Amharic concept of *śālṭane*. It is a remarkable concept."⁴⁴³ Europeans understand *śālṭane* as two concepts: culture and civilization, the former is about spiritual or inner *śālṭane*, cultivation of mind and spirit; the latter is physical, material or oral *śālṭane*, associated with urban organization and life.

442 Mäsay Käbbädä is a pioneer for engaging Asras's work in his article "Return to the Source: AsresYenesew and the West," *Journal of Black Studies* 36(6, 2014), pp.815–832.

443 ፲፩፻፩, Yäkäfteñña Temhrt Zäybe, p.24.

In discussing the Ge'ez meaning, ʼĪgualä underlines the subjection of the human in primeval or elementary conditions. All men are subjected to their inner and outer natural force. The former produces myth, which blinds man's knowledge, and the latter exercises its force over man. Man has been under the subjection of these two forces for a long time; *śələṭane* is the overcoming of this predicament, and the gaining of authority over inner and outer forces. For ʼĪgualä, *śələṭane* signifies the meaning of both culture and civilization. He reads the unity of the two within the concept of *śələṭane*.

ʼĪgualä, like Kābbädä Michael, calls European civilization Faustian, following Goethe's character, a universal human civilization, not exclusively European, a simple but plausible representation of the complex phenomenon called civilization. Correcting the tabula-rasa empty language and parchment of Kābbädä Michael's representation of Ethiopia's *śələṭane*, ʼĪgualä represents it through Saint Yared, an Ethiopian spiritual and musical genius of the sixth century. Analyzing the distinction between *Aworopawi śələṭane* a, European civilization, and *Ityopiawi śələṭane*, ʼĪgualä terms the first anthropocentric and the latter theocentric. The same is true for Asräs Yäne säw, one of the indigenous scholars who call the European material superiority *śəgawi ṭəbāb* (worldly wisdom) as opposed to *Mānfāsawi* or *Sāmayawi ṭəbāb* (spiritual wisdom), which signifies the Ethiopian *śələṭane*. However, according to Asräs, the ancient civilization of Ethiopia embedded in Ge'ez is not devoid of material civilization.

Similarly, Kābbädä condemned Western civilization for its moral degeneration using the condemnation of Gandhi and Ḥaylā-Sellasé, in particular his speech at the League of Nations. Kābbädä advocated receiving Western civilization through a strong leader; he compared Ḥaylā-Sellasé with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a champion of promoting Western material civilization without losing morality and spirituality. He engaged Rabindranath Tagore's universalism and criticism of Gandhi's national resistance and rejection of material civilization to conclude his book *Śələṭane Menden-näčč?* 7

A very plausible argument of ʼĪgualä's is to bypass the binaries and leave behind *the Addis əna aroge* and *Yäwəṣṭ əna Yäwečč* (old vs

new, internal vs external civilization) dichotomy—that we should understand the endogenous *śəltane* first, and blend it with the spirit of the exogenous to open a new chapter in history. He called this process “*bätawahədo Yəkäbral*”, “enriched with synthesis”.⁴⁴⁴

In the mainstream narrative, Ethiopia is an “island of Christianity surrounded by Heathen Sea”,⁴⁴⁵ as Əgualä calls it, theocratic *śəltane*, the spiritual and inner one, with God at its centre, while man is the centre of European civilization. Ethiopia was more spiritually civilized than its surroundings. Christianity as a form of spiritual purity was an aspect of Ethiopian *śəltane* and nationalism. This aspect of nationalism appears similar to Indian nationalism, which was based on the belief that possession of spiritual purity/inner world is superior despite material backwardness. Nationalism in Ethiopia, as in India, was based on the quest for material advancement while preserving spiritual purity. This can be best described by Əgualä’s thesis of “*bätawahədo Yəkäbral*”⁴⁴⁶ an imagining of Ethiopianist intellectuals since the 1940s, after Italy’s second attempt to colonize Ethiopia. These intellectuals were responding to the debate between pro-indigenous, *mänfäsawi tēbāb*, and pro-Western, *śəgawi tēbāb*, that continued for half a century. The victory of Adwa and the survival of the political kingdom gave them more confidence to subvert, if not to discard, the discourse of alterity that assumes the people of the South as incapable of civilizing and ruling themselves. The victory against Italy, however, ensured the country’s independence; the nationalist leaders and intellectuals were quite aware that this independence would not be sustainable without achieving material improvements and, mainly, technological advancement. It was with this urgency that nationalist thought was debated in spaces such as on the famous *Berhanena Sälam*, and continued after 1941, dominated by scholarly debate over *śəltane* and *ləmat*.

Whereas scholars such as Käbbädä Michael were deeply involved in the implementation of state developmentalism, perhaps guided by the principles of modernization, Asräs Yäne säw’s criticism

444 Əgualä, *Yäkäfteñña Temhrt Zäybé*.

445 *Berhanena Selam*, 7 May 1925.

446 Əgualä, *Yäkäfteñña Temhrt Zäybé*, p.75.

was ignored by the national debate while Käbbädä's works and translations of European literature and poetry were prevalent—and were even used in the school curriculum. Only recently have Asräs's works caught the attention of Ethiopianist scholars. However, poetic works prescribing the inevitability of political reform must have influenced the generation that struggled for social and political change.

The dialogue between the intellectuals Ḥaddis, Käbbädä, Asräs and Ḥgualä reveals diverse positions that were a challenge to the global programme of development embraced by Ḥaylä Śəllase's regime. The intellectuals were therefore marginalized by the regime and their works silenced. The contestation continued, however, and today Ethiopia is witnessing a new emergence of the development state discourse, following the socialist developmentalism of the military regime.

Development as Struggle: Reformist Bureaucrats and Popular Movements (1940s–1970s)

Addis Śalaṭane: The Development Discourse in the Post-war Period

FOLLOWING THE MARSHALL Plan and the Truman doctrine with its Point Four Program, development was globalized. Development served as a new rationale for intervention into the global South (generally, the formerly colonized peoples) and made possible a new bifurcated world replacing the old colonized and colonizer binary, the developed and the developing, or underdeveloped.

Despite the polarisation of the developed world along ideological lines, and the differences in historicities of so-called developing countries, the globalized discourse of development had common and homogenizing features, defining the developing world as a tabula rasa of social transformation where history stagnated and intervention was inevitable. The orientation was intervention and donation from the developed to the developing world and it encouraged emulation of the Western path. Initially, it was biased towards industrialization and commercial farming for the market, until the idea of the green revolution emerged in the 1970s. It mobilized science and technology to promote an expert and technocratically-led development path and five years of national planning. Local and regional planning only emerged after the 1960s.⁴⁴⁷ Development foresaw a homogenizing singular

⁴⁴⁷ Escobar Arturo, “Planning”, in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, edited by Wolfgang Sachs (London and New York: Zed

destiny for all human society, defined by market-driven high-mass consumption and by the domination and control of nature by man. Above all, development discourse always promises the unfolding of a new era, and presents new messianic hope to the masses.⁴⁴⁸

This development paradigm, to use Claude Ake's term, that became a global language also became the language of the imperial Ethiopian regime. Since the 1950s the regime had embraced development discourse and had used it as the language of its rule, coining it as *addis ṣəlaṭane*, a new civilization as against the pre-war *ṣəlaṭane*.

The sovereignty and security concerns that dominated the 1940s continued to shape the domestic and international politics of Ethiopia. In a speech addressed to the nation in 1962, and used as the Preface to the Second Five Year Development Plan of Ethiopia, Ḥaylā Səllase reaffirmed the “eradication of man's common enemies—ignorance, hunger and disease” as a condition for “global peace and security”. Such appropriation of the global discourse helped to re-frame the security-development dilemma that dominated the national interest of Ethiopia in the period. Access to the sea, and countering the emerging Eritrean and Somali questions, ensuring the security and continuity of the political kingdom after the colonial balkanization of the Horn of Africa, were the priority. In the words of John Spencer, “breaking free from Britain” and “to stay whole and to reach the sea” was the primary national interest in the 1940s and 50s.⁴⁴⁹ Military and security support, coupled with an urgent need for development aid, shaped Ethiopia's foreign policy. Nation building through the Amharic language and development-led unity was conceived as the means of countering the colonial legacy, if not of decolonization.

Securing unconditional development and military aid became a strategy to fulfil the national interest of Ethiopia. Emperor Ḥaylā-Ṣəllase had to conduct an extended journey to the West and East, transcending ideological difference. His two-month long travels

Books, 2010), pp.145–160.

448 Rist, *The History of Development*.

449 John Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Selassie Years* (Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, 1984), pp.114–281.

covered Egypt, several European countries including the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia—and even, later, China. As a result, Ethiopia secured development and military aid from the US and USSR and several other countries such as Yugoslavia, Japan and Germany. The American Point Four projects, the 400-million ruble development aid from the Soviets and technical support from Yugoslavia were instrumental in declaring the development era in Ethiopia.⁴⁵⁰ Institutions such as Ethiopian Airlines, Imperial Telecommunication, the Highway Authority, and even imperial armed force and higher education centres, agricultural colleges and training centres were a direct outcome of development aid. It is self-evident that beyond its discursive presence, development aid gave birth to the advancement of institution, bureaucracy and apparatus in Ethiopia.

As the source of development aid diversified, the regime acquired the leverage to manipulate and determine its scope, course and extent as well as its meaning. In the national official dialogue of the time, the underdevelopment of Ethiopia was associated with under-utilisation of Ethiopia's natural wealth—fertile land and favourable climate as well as unexplored mineral wealth—with its immense potential for agrarian transformation and industrialization. For that matter, the presence of abundant fertile land was used as justification not to conduct land reform. Lack of educated and skilled manpower, despite the considerably large labour force, was presented as the second factor for Ethiopia's underdevelopment. This led to the opening of agricultural and development training centres and colleges. In two long speeches broadcast in 1959, Emperor Selassie vividly presented the major pillar of official development discourse of the time and reiterated the under-utilized natural wealth of Ethiopia as an explanatory factor for its underdevelopment. He called for the masses to be conscious of this and to work hard to achieve the promised prosperity making use of the natural

450 See Wäldä Sämayät Gäbrä wäld *Haywäte: lä Agäre Ityopia əna läwägänočče Yānabāraññ yāsəra Təmat* (My life: The passion I had for the development of my country Ethiopia and Ethiopians) (Mankusa printing house, 2012EC [2020]).

abundance, promising to provide experts to guide the masses and organise institutions for the implementation of national development plans. A planning board was established with the emperor himself serving as president and the prime minister as chairman. Also established were other institutions including the ministry for economic development and land reform boards.

The *addis śaləṭane* (the new civilisation) permeated this call for the maximum utilisation of Ethiopia's untapped natural abundance for national development. In the two speeches, in addition to the re-conceptualized notion of *addis śaləṭane*, concepts from development economics such as research, strategic plan, programme, market, cooperatives, development experts and institutions made obvious that the global discourse was embraced as the official paradigm of development in Ethiopia.

Emperor Ḥaylā Śəllase, however, and some of his men, understood development as an evolutionary and gradual process. Accentuating this presumption, the second five years began with a quote from Emperor Ḥaylā Selassie's speech from the throne in 1962 declaring "only methodical, step-by-step planning yield and ensure enduring results. True progress is not measured by spectacular pronouncements but demonstrable achievement." This achievement would take time to unfold and would require perseverance and patience from the masses.

Despite the Western model presented as an exemplary path, Ethiopia' age-old *śaləṭane* and statehood were used to resist undesirable prescription. The saying of the time was "Ethiopia has its own *modus operandi*", intended to mean welcoming the prescription of global development institutions without compromising the age-old civilization, with its national consciousness and spirit, that had survived for millennia. The new *śaləṭane* did not dictate uncritical implementation of the global development prescription.

Although Ethiopia's underdevelopment was partially accepted, the regime mobilized the natural wealth, the narrative of the breadbasket of the Middle East and Africa, the cultural purity and Ethiopian exceptionalism, to counter this alterity and othering

image.⁴⁵¹ Ethiopia was the first African state to come up with a comprehensive national development plan. Development aid and natural wealth were considered the engine of political-economic transformation.

Selective application and appropriation of the multiple features of the discourse allowed the regime to reproduce its dominance in the national politics of development, to control the process against intervention from abroad, while scientific knowledge and expert-led development were used to exclude the masses from owning and controlling the process of change in the country. The urgent need for political reform and the quest for ownership of the development process by the masses at the local level were silenced. The official discourse appeared to be the de-historicized and de-politicised version that marginalized multiple alternative imaginations from communities, intellectuals and even from the reformist bureaucrats who held key positions within the regime. The development paradigm institutionalized in Ethiopia excluded the rich discursive tradition which considered the meaning, features and necessity of social transformation.

For Emperor Ḥaylā Šəllase it was simpler to institutionalize and implement progress which did not require political reform. Ethiopia's political system was anti-development because it excluded the masses from the process. The five-year development plans were an extension of this exclusion — the first two plans favoured the small landowning class, neglecting and alienating the predominant peasant agriculture (which did not receive attention until late in 1968 with the third plan).⁴⁵² The regime used development to cement Ethiopian unity and silence essentialist dissident voices, which were growing in number. There was an urgent call for the political institutions to unite the divided society along ethnic and religious lines. This political crisis required a political solution.

However, the other side of the totalising effect of the

451 Edward Kissi, *Famine and the Politics of Food Relief in United States Relations with Ethiopia 1950–1991* PhD Diss. (department of History, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada 1997).

452 Dessalegn Rahmato, *The Peasant and the State: Studies of Agrarian Change in Ethiopia 1950s–2000s* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2009.)

development discourse conceived as an anti-politics machine was its fragmentation as well as its failure to de-politicize either the intellectuals or the masses. It evolved as a contested terrain and was used for both the mode of rule and language resistance. As elsewhere, the language of rule mirrors the resistance to it. Development, a very powerful and attractive political concept, inevitably became ready-made to be appropriated and used as a political tool.

There were at least two polarized sites of resistance in the post-war period. The first was the state structure where reformist bureaucrats, individually and in small groups, struggled to reform Ḥaylā-Selassie's reluctant regime which was gradually becoming a reactionary agent arresting development of its own design.⁴⁵³ The second was civil or political society, where numerous developmental associations were organized to address the needs of the masses and provide an alternative to exclusionist state developmentalism.

The 1960s coup d'état against Ḥaylā-Səllase's regime was one of the historical landmarks in the history of struggle from above in the name of development.⁴⁵⁴ The political struggle of *Mecha* and *Tulema* (MTA) represents the popular struggle. The boundary between the two, however, was very blurred. The coup and the numerous prescriptive texts produced by intellectual and reformist bureaucrats reveal the weakness and the fragility of the anti-politics machine. Despite its totalizing power, the development discourse also generated the power of counter-resistance—and political events such as plots, coups and revolution in Ethiopia. One can see how development was used to mobilize political resistance against the regime.

It is worth recalling that the reformist soldiers and bureaucrats upheld concepts such as *śələṭane* and *ləmat*, *ədəgūt* and *bələşgəna* (development, growth, civilization and prosperity) as key terms of the declaration read by the crown prince Asfaw Wässän while the emperor was on another pilgrimage abroad. The declaration was transmitted to the public by radio and in print. It began by comparing Ethiopia's long and uninterrupted history with the backward state of the peasantry and other sectors of Ethiopian society such as the

453 Tekalign, *Republicans on the Throne*.

454 Ibid.

merchants. It described the conditions of the masses and how the political system had turned into an instrument of exploitation of the oppressed masses while contributing to the prosperity of the few elites. The declaration clearly indicated that the political system was the root cause of Ethiopia's underdevelopment and promised to establish a people's government⁴⁵⁵—a counter-narrative to the official which saw the political system and national consciousness as the sacred cows of Ethiopia's age-old civilization. Many contemporary reformist bureaucrats remember the historic coup as progressive despite the bloodshed it caused, while a few consider it the coup-makers' quest for power and the product of a foreign conspiracy.⁴⁵⁶

Following the aborted coup, many political writings and literary works clearly depict the necessity of political reform. Reformist bureaucrats tried to promote political reform as a panacea for Ethiopia's security-development dilemma. Mäkwännən Habtäwäld and Wäldä Giyorgis Wäldä Yoḥannəs (before the coup), and other reformists such as Ḥaddis Alämayähu, Berhanu Dənqe and Abiy Abäbä wrote prescriptive letters and books underlining the urgent need for political reform. Some, such as Mäkwännən Habtäwäld, and Wäldä Giyorgis Wäldä Yoḥannəs, who saw the ruling upper nobility and landowning class as anti-development, tried to mobilize local leaders.⁴⁵⁷ Others tried to bring transformation through popular development associations.

The Popular Development Communities in Ethiopia

Since the 1940s, the establishment of popular self-help welfare and development associations paralleled the development discourse from below the national institutions hosting the global development apparatus. The discursive binary of *Ityopyawi šəlaṭane*/Ethiopian *šəlaṭane* and European civilization was conditioned by the bifurcated non-discursive histories: the national development institutions on one side and the popular development movement on the other.

455 Declaration of the 1960s coup d'état. See Berhanu Asres, *Man yanager Yenaget yenebre*, pp.188–189.

456 see Wäldä sämayat Ḥəywäte.

457 Zewde Reta, *Ḥaylä Šəllase's mängest*.

There was a proliferation of popular social welfare and development associations as a political community organized from below—by the educated, by business and even by a political elite that aspired to champion the rights and agency of local communities in the struggle for development. The development patriots and reformist bureaucrats occupied the state apparatus structurally, but they were also, perhaps, rooted in the popular ideologically; they occupied the disarticulated discursive structure while they attempted to articulate the popular voice into the state, creating a conversation, translation and negotiation between the two. They could be considered “organic intellectuals”, to use the Gramscian notion connected to the mobilized community’s cultural-linguistic and geographic origin but, above all, in the articulation of local sensibilities. Despite their position within the state apparatus, these intellectuals had seen the potential of community-based welfare. What Grant Farred theorizes as vernacular intellectuals drawing on the Gramscian notion of organic intellectuals perhaps further elaborates the position of the patriots of development in Ethiopia.

For Farred, the vernacular intellectuals’ relations with their constituency, the popular force (or, in his words, their being “rooted in communities”) defines them as Gramscian organic intellectuals. Like political parties, they link the popular with the macro-level state apparatus. Most of the intellectuals who wrote, and rallied the people, operated in the absence of political parties. Occupying space in the dominant and exclusionist state apparatus, they had “an equivocal relationship to hegemony, a complex negotiation with the dominant group”. The vernacular intellectuals and reformist bureaucrats are defined by mobilizing the mode of resistance and survival of the popular forces.⁴⁵⁸ The “development communities” of 1960s Ethiopia best exemplify the popular force produced by the intellectuals against hegemonic state developmentalism.

The development communities were historical events in the evolution of development discourse from the 1940s to the end of the 1960s, leading to the Ethiopian revolution in 1974. The historiography

458 Farred, *What’s My Name?* p.12.

of the period was, however, dominated by the study of spectacular resistance and protests, plots, coups d'état and student movements against the imperial regime, from the 1950s to the eruption of revolution in 1974. The formation of development communities and their struggle to achieve their welfare objectives and to survive in a repressive political environment offer insight into the critical study of the politics of development. The history of these communities shows how development can be organised and implemented from below, defying the representation of masses as helpless pawns of the development apparatus.

The pioneer developmental community came from the people of Gurage, followed by Yifat, Tigray, Gondar and the Wolyta and Mecha-Tulema self-help welfare and development associations. They emerged simultaneously after the Second World War with national development planning involving national and global experts and institutions dominated by senior officials and foreign experts with access to aid who excluded the agency and the experience of the masses. On the other hand, the local development associations were based among the people, despite being led by educated officials and reformist state bureaucrat. The development communities would tactfully invite officials to be members, using their defiance as a strategy to manoeuvre under the totalizing power of state developmentalism.

In law, these locally-based community organizations were considered “civilian self-help associations”⁴⁵⁹ based on the revised 1955 Ethiopian Constitution and Civil Code 505. Legally, they are expected to be a civil association or society that can play a role in issues which the state may not reach. It was natural for the local associations to be provincial, but most adopted transnationality and appeared multi-religious in membership and sensibilities. The dominant unifying element was similar development and welfare aspirations, though articulated differently. Some used other local

459 Mohammed Hassen, “The Mecha-Tulema Association 1963–1967 and the development of Oromo Nationalism,” in *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom & Democracy*, edited by Asafa Jalata (Trenton, NJ :Red Sea Press, Inc 1998), p. 195.

languages, in addition to Amharic, to disseminate information. The name, emblem and the provincial nature of these associations created a tense relationship with the state security forces, who suspected them of tribalism when the national policy was “detrribalization”, and Amharicization. In the eyes of state officials, local and provincial aspirations were contrary to state policy and a threat to national security and peace. The *Addis Zāmān* newspaper asked, “What kind of tasks can a person in the parliament do without the skill of Amharic language?”⁴⁶⁰ It is noted that “the period from 1942 to 1991 was a time of intense Amharization”⁴⁶¹ but very few authors associate the legacy of Italian colonial policy of divide and rule with the reactive measures of the imperial regime to erase the challenge of unity. It was because of this development-security dilemma that the public security department of the imperial regime took the responsibility of the registration and legalization of local development associations. All associations received their licences from this security department.

Some of these development communities, such as that of the *Säbat Bäte* Gurage Development Association (organized as a committee with the official name “Gurage sub-country road construction organization committee” and with the specific goal of constructing roads in the Gurage locality), were established for a specific developmental purpose. In spite of this, people’s development associations had to pass the people’s security office’s requirements. The same is true for the Union of people’s for Yifat Development or Wolyta Development community, all of which focused on provincial or district-level development works.

Although they were local and provincial in organisational terms, most drew their members from different linguistic groups and considered Ethiopian citizenship as their criterion. A good example in this sense was the Yifat Development Association. The major objective of the union was “to develop the collective country using the knowledge and unity of different nationalities living in the Yifat district towards improving themselves.”⁴⁶² The development of

460 *Addis Zemen*, NO 2 1949 EC.

461 Hassen, “The Macha-Tulama Association,” p.188.

462 *Yä-Yifat Lemat Hzbawi Hibrät*. Constitution of the union, Article 2,1.

the district was envisioned as improving the lives of the community and uniting linguistic groups at the local level. The goals ranged from improvement of living condition to enhancement of the moral and cultural dynamics of all linguistic groups while at the same time encouraging unity, cultural exchange and interaction.

In terms of content, the *raison d'être* of most associations complement the national development priorities as reflected in the first five-year development plan (1957–1961/62) which prioritizes infrastructural development. Most association quoted from the speech of the emperor as a motivating and guiding principle. Most of the development associations, including the abovementioned road construction committee of the people of Gurage, prioritized road networks from villages to town and between towns. This means that the state developmentalism and popular development thinking was in agreement regarding the importance of infrastructure. The popular forces, however, also considered other social and cultural aspects as part of the concept of development. But their major departure from state developmentalism was that they envisioned the community as agent of its own development.

The people's development associations were centred on the local community. The social cost of national development plans was high (mainly the eviction of the masses in the name of development) while the local projects were community-based and the social and financial costs were minimal. These associations assessed local needs and condemned the homogenization of national expert-based development projects.

Conclusion

In the evolution of state developmentalism in Ethiopia from 1941 to the 1970s, the pattern negotiated between the global apparatus and the nationalist state animated a discourse in which the global was translated at state and macro level into a specific Ethiopian context: hegemonic, patronizing and depoliticizing. It was, however, paralleled with the emergence of development communities organized by intellectuals who tried to introduce the local and popular into national politics.

The two parallel initiatives—the state and the popular—conflicted because the state’s philosophy of patronizing, disempowering and totalizing development intervention failed to recognize the local communities. Despite the regime’s ability to crush some of them (such as the *Mecha Tulema*), these conflicts exposed the contradiction within the system and the exclusion of the masses. In addition to political protests, coups d’état and plots, the communities played a role in political contestation, some serving as bases for the 1970s revolts and political movements. The history of this struggle for advancement shows how development discourse can be appropriated, articulated and deployed by popular forces to form a political community that challenges the disempowering, depoliticizing and totalizing apparatus of the state.

EPILOGUE

THIS BOOK STARTED by discussing the pre-modern state and its reproduction, focusing on the place of elite slaves in the Ethiopian political realm. The emperor, the elite slaves and the masses were the *zega*, forming a trinity in the dialectics of pre-modern power relations. The modern state formation retained this dialectical power structure despite the emergence of modern intellectuals and reformist bureaucrats and the gradual disappearance of elite slaves from the political realm in the first half of the twentieth century. The *geta-barya* pastoral power relationship continued to define Ethiopian hierarchy in the political and domestic realms. The pastoral form of hierarchical power relations was maintained despite the gradual disappearance of slaves and elite slaves from Ethiopia power dynamics. Only the actors changed. The structure remained intact.

The idea of change and social transformation, the modern state, its ethos and political imagination, can be traced back to the pre-modern discursive tradition, as best exemplified by *Fakkare Iyäsus*. The modern state is a negotiation of prophetic imagination and modernisation. The modernising emperors, as prophets of change and transformation, utilized development and modernisation to reproduce the *geta-barya* pastoral power structure; a paternalistic, gradual, hegemonic and top-down project to civilize the subject, if not the object. In this process, the masses were defined only as the object of such imagined social transformation. The global discourse of development, obsessed by top-down planning, appeared only to reinforce this structure through new technology and the language of power. Even the removal of the emperor did not affect the power logic.

The five years of Italian colonial developmentalism exercised the same power structure and introduced a new language to it as a champion of ethnic and religious freedom in Ethiopia. Colonial power did not alter the emerging and consolidating pastoral power structure—rather, it reinforced it. Italian colonial rule was the new pastoral holder of power, promising development, modernization and freedom to national and religious groups as a new form of

manumission.

In light of the legacy of Italian colonial rule, the Ḥaylā Səllase government since the 1940s should be seen primarily as a mode of resistance against colonial politics that restructured the body politic through tribalism and the politicization of ethnic and religious identity. Dealing with this legacy, ḤaylāSəllasé devised a new model of rule defined by the politicization of the Amharic language and depoliticization of religion. This was a moment of decolonization to Ethiopia as it was to other African states. The Nyerere doctrine, which became the principle of continental unity, reflected this detribalization of African nations, discouraging the promotion of ethnic homeland as national homeland. As part of this process of decolonization, Amharic was deployed as the language of political community whereas religion was a prepolitical and private affair.

The regime did not, however, attempt to problematize and democratize the *geta-barəya* pastoral power structure, in spite of mass resistance and calls for change from its reformist bureaucrats. It tried to decolonize *without* democratizing the inherited structure. The state developmentalism that the soldiers put in place after the revolution affirms the similar structure in which the *derg*, the military-political elite, dominated the masses and many of the educated subjects who had fought for the revolution. Revolutionary change and radical transformation were seen through the lens of the pastoral mode of power and, perhaps, through the template of manumission.

The liberation struggle that brought the victors into power in 1991 did not introduce a new logic of power despite the mobilization of liberal values and of language. Elections, federalism and developmentalism were experimented within the existing pastoral power structure. Irrespective of the change of parties and personalities, the masses remain the *zega*, excluded from power. If we call this a transition, it is a proverbial paradox of political reform in Africa.

As the African post-independence elite inherited the colonial

state, the modern Ethiopian leaders inherited a state constructed through the logic of *geta-barya* power relations shaped by a short span of colonial rule and decolonization politics. Those in control reduced democracy to a means of capturing power and implementing the imagined utopia of social transformation—but without transforming the political means inherited from their predecessors.

Development in Ethiopia could be seen as achieving self-consciousness and recognition for both the master and the slave, in the Hegelian slave-master dialectic, without problematizing the position of the master and of the slave. Even if the slave becomes a master, the nature of power remains intact—unless both enter into a new power relationship, a new possibility is unrealistic. In Ethiopia, politics, in spite of discursive reaches and emancipatory aspirations, has failed to achieve what the elite and the masses desired, creating only the reproduction of the power structure in both the private and public realms.

The contemporary politics of Ethiopia, as elsewhere on the African continent, can be best described by the binary of management of difference and by addressing the development predicament. In Ethiopia, the politicization of nationality (or “ethnicity”) and the depoliticization of religion were put in place without problematizing the power structure. The present regime inherited the *geta-barya* power structure from the pre-modern pastoral state; the politicization of nationality from Italian colonial rule (later redefined by the Ethiopian student movement); and the depoliticization of religion and state developmentalism from the Ḥaylā Səlla regime. It restructured the state, dividing it into homelands along linguistic lines as a reaction against structure along geographic lines as in the past, and imposed Amharic as the national language. The current state of developmentalism, serves as a unifying force along identity lines. Development discourse connects and unites the divided society, presenting the state as protector and midwife of the hitherto imagined utopia.

The pastoral power which deployed these contradictory discourses has appeared totalizing and hegemonic through its interventionist discourse that displaces the role and the agency of the

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subject. It has, however, been conditioned by the counter-politics of resistance and survival by popular and intellectual forces. The mode of resistance in Ethiopia is also shaped by these discourses of politicized nationality and development, which indicates that development discourse evolved in the modern Ethiopian state as both an instrument of rule and a dialogue of emancipation promoted by popular and intellectual forces. Democratizing the pastoral power structure that framed the Ethiopian body politic, and decolonizing the management of difference through politicized ethnicity, is indispensable to the potential of the Ethiopian state and society to flourish.

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